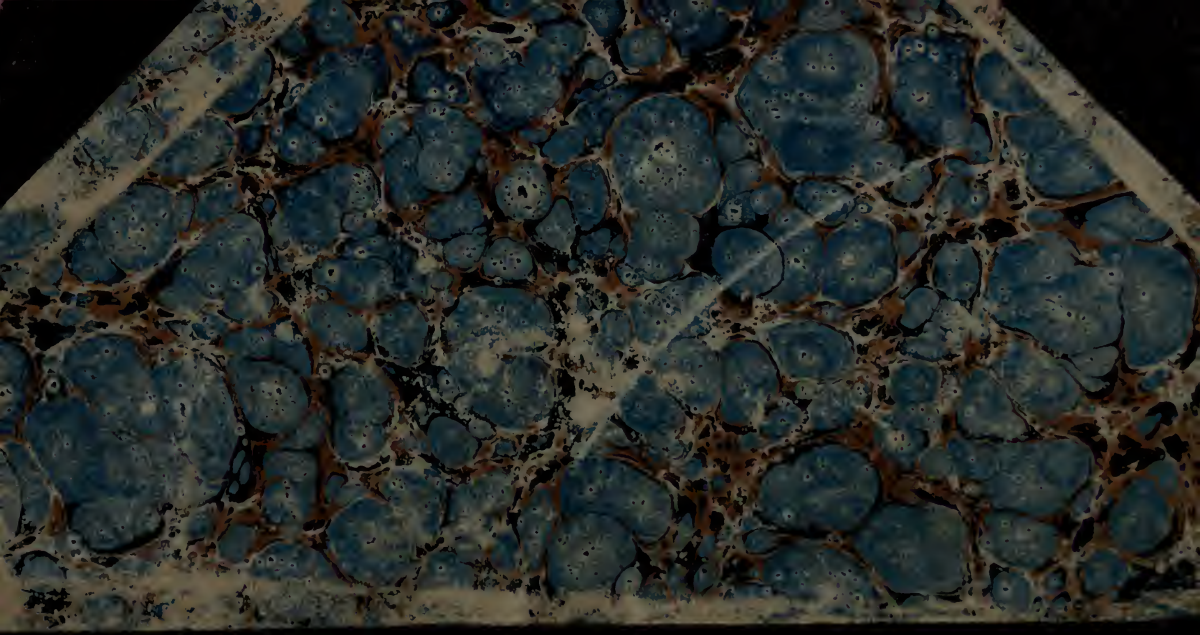

# POPULAR

# TALES AND ROMANCES.

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BY

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POPULAR

# TALES AND ROMANCES.

## ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

### I.

Rembrandt's reputation was solidly established in 1646. Magnificent engravings, made by himself, had popularised his original and fantastic manner throughout Europe. Every one of his productions was a progress in art; the admirable skilfulness of the chiaro-oscuro—the strange contrast of light and shadow, the perspective of shade, of which he alone had explored the mysterious depths, justified the enthusiasm of his numerous partisans.

It would be difficult to trace out the course of Rembrandt's genius, and to follow it through its successive developments. The fact is, that the eye of this artist was specially formed for seizing an object better through the half-tints of twilight than in the dazzling glare of open daylight.

He enjoyed darkness.

During his youth he was often met in some of those murky taverns where sightly Flemish heads, grouped

about a table, receive the yellow rancid rays of an oily lamp, or the dingy grey light of a leaden casement.

After the death of his wife, Rembrandt retired to an old house in the Rue des Juifs, at Amsterdam. His family consisted only of a sister, who took charge of the household, and of a son, eighteen or twenty years of age, whose career had not yet been determined on.

Brokers and picture-dealers, always on the watch for his works, had free access to the painter's house.

We are in the month of March, 1656. One evening, Rembrandt, habitually low-spirited and sombre, appeared in excellent humour. During supper, his old spirit of conviviality returned to him: he made a thousand jokes on the subject of his sister Louise, who —she was sixty years of age—he declared was by this time quite old enough to marry.

He also boasted of his son Titus, and praised in him all sorts of excellent qualities which he had never before perceived. Finally—a thing of rare occurrence—he had up a can of old porter, and helped himself to several glasses of the good liquor.

When ten o'clock had struck, and the watchman had uttered his lugubrious cry amidst the silence of night, Rembrandt lit a lamp and went from the room, wishing Louise and his son good night as he did so.

They heard him cross the hall and open the door of the studio. He went in.

This room, very lofty, received its only daylight from a single window rising from the floor almost to the height of the ceiling. A red silk curtain intercepted the light, which could be either increased or diminished at pleasure by means of a running cord. Against the walls were suspended pieces of old armour—helmets,

axes, poignards, all covered with a thick coating of rust.

Rembrandt, caring little for the traditions of Greece and Italy, called these his "antiques."

In front of the window, on an easel, stood a picture of middle size. The artist drew a stool and seated himself, throwing the light of his lamp upon the newly-painted canvas. It was "Abraham's Sacrifice," one of Rembrandt's *chefs-d'œuvre*, now the ornament of the gallery of St. Petersburg.

In presence of his work, the vulgar face of the painter was illumined by a ray of genius.

"It is beautiful!" he said with a smile of pride. But enthusiasm gave place to analysis: his heavy brows closed together, and he set himself to examine the details of his work. Now and then an exclamation of pleasure escaped him, often a gesture of vexation; he clutched his palette convulsively, advanced the brush to the canvas, then threw it down. Inarticulate words betrayed the artist's doubts; his execution had not reached to the full height of his standard.

But, while he was thus engaged, another figure, not less striking, not less enthusiastic, appeared in the doorway, gazing with a look of eager and hungry longing at the picture, over the painter's shoulder.

It was the figure of a Jew, like numbers which the Flemish painters have transmitted to us. Imagine a long, meagre, bony body, enveloped in a kind of wide-skirted green robe, beneath which projected misshapen shoes with large silver buckles, and bowed legs with knotty and pronounced knee-caps; above all this a yellow head, covered with a pointed hat, and a face so seamed with wrinkles that it might have been taken

for the visage of an ancient Egyptian mummy; the skin, tightly stretched over the bald crown and sharp cheek-bones, shone like ivory; a long nose, drawn-in lips, and angular-pointed chin, completed this strange physiognomy. But that which gave it a truly inconceivable expression of intelligence was the look: large grey eyes, like those of a lynx, darted lightning glances through long white eyebrows that drooped almost on to the cavity of the eyes.

This personage opened the studio door with so much precaution that it turned on its hinges without making the least noise; and he advanced behind the stool on which the painter was seated so stealthily that Rembrandt heard nothing of his approach.

It was a strange spectacle, these two figures contemplating the same work. On the features of one might have been read pride of creation, but also the severe criticism of the artist upon himself. On the face of the other were marked, surprise, boundless astonishment, the intensest expression of enthusiasm.

The one who most admired was the Jew; adoration was in his attitude, in his gestures, in his looks.

Suddenly Rembrandt seized up a brush and bent forward towards the canvas, saying as he did so—

"That detail injures the effect of the whole; I must alter it."

But the Jew, carried away by an invincible impulse, seized the painter's arm.

"No, no!" he cried, "don't meddle with it; it's good, I tell you!"

Startled by this sudden apparition, Rembrandt turned round with an expression of surprise; then, recognising the broker Jonas, burst into a fit of laughter.

"Ha! ha! ha! It's you, neighbour, is it? How the deuce did you get in here?"

Without returning any answer to this question, the old Jew exclaimed—

"Master Rembrandt, this picture is your masterpiece! It's magnificent! It's sublime! The God of Israel performed a miracle in saving Abraham's son, but this admirable picture is more marvellous still! You have never before attained to such perfection."

"Bah!" cried the well-pleased artist, "you are always saying that. According to you, my latest picture is always my masterpiece."

"And it's true, Master Rembrandt," cried the old man; "it's true; for every time you surpass yourself: but you cannot go any further."

"Between us, Jonas," replied the painter, with a smile of triumph, "you don't know your business; instead of finding fault with my work, you raise it so high that——"

"Find fault with this picture!" cried the broker; "one must have lost one's eyes—one must be an infamous libeller! Besides, master, do you not know its value as well as I do?"

"Yes," replied Rembrandt, in a slightly foppish tone; "I am tolerably satisfied with the work, and if it were not sold——"

"Sold!" cried the Jew, in a heartrending voice—"sold! Impossible! You are joking. Sold!—to whom?"

"To a rich German amateur; the price was fixed beforehand."

"The price fixed!" repeated the Jew, in consternation; "what price, master?"

"A thousand ducats."

"Oh! you've lost your senses. What are a thousand ducats for such a work? You will never do anything better—never again, perhaps, anything so good."

An expression of doubt came upon the painter's face.

"I—I will give you fifteen hundred ducats for it," continued the broker.

"Impossible," answered the other, regretfully.

"Two thousand!"

"It's an unfortunate piece of business, but it's beyond recall," replied Rembrandt, his voice trembling as he spoke, for he loved money.

"Two thousand five hundred!" cried the old man, sinking on to a chair, as if terrified by the exorbitance of the offer he was making.

Rembrandt turned a penetrating look upon him.

"You offer too much, Jonas," he said; "you would lose by it."

"Yes, yes! I shall ruin myself," said the Jew; "I know that well: but how can I bear to let another become the possessor of this magnificent picture?"

After a moment's silence, the broker added—

"Master Rembrandt, I have promised to deliver to a rich amateur the first picture that leaves your studio; my word is pledged."

"And I," replied Rembrandt, rising, visibly affected—"I, too, have engaged my word—more than that, I have signed a contract."

The Jew rose and took the artist by the hand.

"Master," he said, with a quivering voice which it is impossible to describe, "I can offer you no more. I have a daughter, Rembrandt; you know my little Rebecca? If I were childless, I would offer you more.

Two thousand five hundred ducats is a large sum—a magnificent offer; but for a masterpiece no price can be too dear. Come—how much do you ask for it? Two thousand five hundred ducats are not enough?—We may be able to agree."

These words, uttered with astonishing volubility, betrayed the Jew's inward agitation. His look, indeed, was so full of trouble and anxiety as to touch the painter.

"Jonas," he replied, pointing to the stamp of a seal placed upon the canvas, "this picture has been sold—the contract for it signed in duplicate."

"The will of Heaven be done, then!" cried the Jew, in accents of grief. "I will come back to-morrow to see your amateur, and if he will give up to me his bargain, I will hand over to him the difference of our prices."

"You will not be able to make any such terms with him," said Rembrandt, "for the purchaser of this picture is the Prince of Hesse-Cassel. You'll be more fortunate another time, Jonas. Believe me, I'm sorry for your disappointment—by which I lose fifteen hundred ducats—an enormous sum out of the pocket of an artist with a family like me."

They both left the studio sighing heavily. Painter and Jew alike were filled with consternation.

Rembrandt conducted Jonas to the door-step of his house.

"By the way," he asked, "how did you get into my house? I did not hear you let in."

"Your sister told me where you were."

"To be sure," replied the painter, shaking the old broker's hand.

As they parted, the cathedral clock struck eleven.

Rembrandt crossed a small open court in front of his house. The moon shone in the sky, pale and meditative. He followed Jonas with his look as far as he could see him through the dusky streets; then, having shut and barred the outer gates, he let loose two enormous bull-dogs, and entered his house, gloomy and dispirited.

Rembrandt the miser, Rembrandt the money-lender, had lost fifteen hundred ducats!

## II.

The city of Amsterdam at that time possessed an establishment, remarkable in its way, the tavern of the Francs-Soudards.

It was there that the sons of good houses completed their education; there that they learned to drink ale and porter, to play at cards and dice, and to swear after the most approved fashion. It was a magnificent tavern!

It was not one of those poor hostels where the voices of the drinkers are broken by the angle of a wall, or smothered by a ceiling. No chairs, tables, or glass-covered lamps were there to be seen — wretched utensils that offer no resistance to the attacks of a madly-joyous company. No; the tavern of the Francs-Soudards was an immense cellar; its arched roof, thirty feet high, chorussed the bacchanalian song, and never failed to repeat the refrain.

By the judicious foresight of Dame Catherine, the hostess, barrels served for chairs and casks for tables, and their solid construction defied all kinds of attack.

Now, on the night when Master Rembrandt fastened his outer gates with so much care, and let loose his bull-dogs in the open forecourt, Titus, the amiable young man whose praises he had sounded at the supper-table, formed one of a select company at the Francs-Soudards.

The hour was late, the tavern almost deserted. A single group still held their places around a vast tun. The light of an open oil-lamp placed in their midst dimly pierced the darkness of the place, and threw out against a red ground the black, shadowy forms of the various personages surrounding it.

Every one of these persons expressed the liveliest attention.

Rembrandt's son, seated in the first row, appeared greatly excited. Facing him sat a tall sharper, with a look sparkling with malignity; a long rapier crossed his legs; with one hand he raised a leathern dice-box, and with the other a broad plumed hat. The contest seemed to be between those two. They were playing a reckless game, and Titus was losing.

"Seven!" he cried, throwing the dice on the head of the tun.

All the spectators pressed forward to see the throw.

"Nine!" cried the other.

Profound silence followed these words; no sound but the rattle of the dice in the box was to be heard.

"Ten!" said Titus.

"Twelve!" cried his adversary.

There was a great commotion. Titus dashed the dice-box on the ground, and cursed his luck.

"I have your word for twenty-five ducats, eh, comrade?" asked the other.

"Are you afraid to trust me?" cried the young man angrily.

"No, no; I know you'll pay me."

"What the devil!" cried a Fleming with a beetroot nose. "Pay! of course he'll pay. Titus always pays. He paid yesterday, he has paid to-day, and he'll pay to-morrow. He breaks the bank as regularly as clockwork."

Everybody laughed.

"Van Hopp," cried the young man, "it appears very much as if you were making game of me!"

"Not the least in the world. I only say that you regularly break the bank."

"And you," cried Titus, greatly exasperated, "are too miserly to risk a double. I dare you to do it."

"Very likely, my little man. Before playing, I like to see the money on the board, and you have not an escalin in your pocket."

These words, pronounced in a jeering tone, excited Titus's anger to the highest degree. He restrained himself, however.

"Wait here till I come back, Van Hopp," he cried, "and you shall see the money on the table—you shall see it! And you, Master Van Eick—you shall be paid at once."

He hurried out of the tavern.

The party closed up round the tun, relit their pipes, and awaited the return of Rembrandt's son.

"Here, Dame Catherine!" cried Titus's adversary; "a moos; I'll pay for it."

The hostess quickly placed a jug upon the tun. The glasses were filled. Van Eick threw his arm about Dame Catherine's buxom waist, and imprinted a sound-

ing kiss upon her neck: to which proceeding she made no objection: he had money.

Clouds of smoke rose above the drinkers. All their great fleshy faces expressed placidity, the supreme comfortableness that results from the enjoyment of a material life. Not a word or a look was exchanged; silence was unbroken for a full quarter of an hour. At length Van Hopp's pipe went out; he emptied it methodically, and then proceeded to say—

"Do you know, I can't understand Master Rembrandt; no one can deny that he is a great painter, and a man full of good sense; but he throws his money away on his son like a fool. It's inconceivable!"

"Yes," said another, sending forth a puff of tobacco-smoke, "quite inconceivable!"

After a while Van Hopp repeated—

"Wholly inconceivable!"

A third then remarked—

"Titus has lost three hundred ducats this week. Master Rembrandt must be blind not to see that his son is a fool."

"Bah!" cried Van Eick, with a caustic smile, "the young fellow is completing his training; a few more lessons, and I promise you he shall be something presentable. His father understands this, and——"

"His father?" interrupted Van Hopp; "his father is a miser, and I'm sure doesn't give him an escalin."

At this moment the door opened and Titus appeared, triumphantly jingling a long money-bag filled with ducats.

"Now, friends," cried he, "are you ready?"

He went up to Van Eick and threw him a handful of gold.

"There's yours. And you, Van Hopp, since you always require to see the money on the board, here it is. How much do you intend to stake?"

"All I have about me," replied the Fleming.

They sat down.

By the soul of Satan! play is an infernal power. It makes the muscles tremble, the temples throb, our very vitals quiver. Fear, joy, triumph, despair, terror, and hate—all the passions are concentrated in gambling, all are under its command.

Play! play! It will reanimate the body in its grave; the skeleton of the gambler will seize a dice-box, its empty orbits flashing lightnings, its teeth grinding with rage.

See these apathetic, motionless faces, these looks in which there is no intelligence—this flaccid, nerveless, fibreless flesh—how it all becomes active, moves, twists, contracts and extends itself! These men are not playing; they but watch the players; they are not actors in the drama, but only spectators of it, and yet passion dominates and holds them in its iron bonds.

An hour later, Titus's ducats had passed into the pocket of Van Hopp.

## III.

Titus left the tavern humming a tune; the poor fellow tried to conceal his mortification. But no sooner was he in the street than a horrible imprecation burst from his lips.

"Five thousand devils seize the whole of you in their claws!" he cried, turning towards the door. Then he snatched off his velvet cap, with the intention of tearing

it to pieces; but he replaced it on his head, and went away laughing.

"Bah!" he cried, "what's the money?—ten, twenty, forty ducats? A trifle—not worth thinking about. Hasn't Jonas offered me his purse?—can't I put my hand into it whenever I please? Oh, brave and worthy Jew! I respect, I venerate you, Jonas! By the God of Israel, I'll become a Jew myself, and marry your little Rebecca!"

Titus hurried along the deserted streets. A bright idea had, no doubt, flashed upon his mind.

The night was dark, the silence as profound as the darkness; a few stars shone at intervals through the rifts in the clouds, like the pale phosphorescent gleams that spring from breaking waves. He passed along the edge of a canal, the muddy water of which reflected the dark and threatening sky; Rembrandt's son recalled to mind his father's engravings.

At length, skirting the cathedral, as the clock struck two, he stopped in front of an old house, at which he looked up. It was one of those antique constructions dating from the Middle Ages; the gable overhung the street, and wooden beams, symmetrically arranged, were imbedded in the walls. Behind the house extended a large garden.

Titus climbed over the boundary-wall and gave a signal; a few minutes afterwards a small window was opened.

"Is it you, seigneur?" asked a tremulous voice.

"Yes, Esther, it's me."

"All right, all right; I recognise you."

A key grated in the lock: the door was opened by an emaciated hand.

"Ah! Seigneur Rembrandt," said the old woman, "you have kept her waiting a long time. Poor Rebecca had given up all hope of seeing you; she has been crying so!"

Titus went upstairs, the old woman slowly following.

She was a good old soul, this Esther; for more than half a century she had been in the service of Jonas; she loved his little daughter so much that she could refuse her nothing. As to physique, Esther resembled the sibyl of Cumæ: small, crooked, tottering, her head shaking, her eyes round and keen; her mouth had disappeared, and the nose and chin being thus brought together formed themselves into a beak.

Titus hurried along a vast passage, and precipitately opening a door, edged with furs, found himself in Rebecca's chamber.

All that is richest and most sumptuous in our modern luxury pales before the splendour of this little apartment. Imagine a high, narrow, vaulted room, the dividing lines brilliantly painted, a silver chain, descending from the centre of the arched ceiling, sustaining a bronze candelabra. An Indian carpet of wondrously intricate design covers the floor. Two high windows, in the Gothic style, with their lattice-work of copper and their stained glass, reflect a dazzling light.

On a low sofa reclined little Rebecca.

Oh, Titus! Titus!—happy young man!

The daughter of Jonas—truly an Eastern pearl of ideal purity—awaited the son of Rembrandt. Her elbow resting on the edge of the sofa, her head upon her hand, her hair loose upon her white shoulders, the poor girl looked sad and downcast. A tear glittered under her long lashes. The ungrateful one came not!

On seeing him rush into the room she could not repress a cry of happiness.

"It is you, dearest! Oh, how happy I am! You have not forgotten me, then!"

The young man threw himself on his knees before her and encircled her dainty waist with his arms. Their looks, their sighs, their hair, commingled.

"Oh, how beautiful you are!" he cried; "how beautiful!"

An hour fled. The young lovers counted not the minutes; they spoke in tones so low that silence itself was undisturbed by the sound of their whispering voices.

Suddenly the hammer of the old cathedral clock struck upon the bell, and its solemn vibrations rang out afar. At the same moment a door at the end of the passage was opened. Titus listened tremblingly.

Slow steps approached the chamber. The young man sprang to the candelabra and blew out the lights.

Some one stopped before the door; a ray of light gleamed through the keyhole and formed a star upon the opposite wall. Titus held his breath. At length the unknown continued his way along the passage, the point of light described an undulating curve upon the hangings, and the sound of the footsteps grew fainter and fainter.

"Who is that?" whispered the young man.

"It is my father," replied Rebecca; "he walks about at night."

Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, Rembrandt's son opened the door and looked out. In the distance he saw Jonas enveloped in a large cloak; his thin arm, carrying a candle, projected like a branch of a tree from

under the folds of his mantle, and the immense shadow thrown by his form filled the passage. Coming to an oaken door, he opened it and disappeared.

There was something strange in this apparition. Titus inquired of the young girl—

"What is your father doing, at this time of night?"

"I do not know," she replied; "I was quite a child when I heard him for the first time; I trembled, hid myself in a corner, and whispered a prayer. Every time, as he has done to-night, he stops before the door, and then I hear his footsteps die away."

"It's very strange," said Titus, turning suddenly pale. "He never comes in here, you say?"

"No, never."

"What is there behind that large oak door?"

"I know not. He alone keeps the key, and nobody besides himself goes in there."

"It's very extraordinary," said the young man, growing more and more agitated.

"No doubt it is, dear friend; but there is no use in troubling ourselves with what we cannot understand. Let us talk again of our love."

"I must be going," replied Titus. "Your father may discover——"

"No, no, he knows nothing. Pray do not go!"

She tried to retain him by caresses; but brave Titus was afraid. He snatched up his cap, slipped down the passage, and across the garden. A few minutes later he sprang into the street and ran away as if the Prince of Darkness had been at his heels.

## IV.

On the following day, Monseigneur the Prince of Hesse-Cassel, to do honour to the painter, deigned to visit Rembrandt's house.

This prince was a superb man; only to see his corkscrew moustache, his white-plumed hat, his embroidered velvet coat, his gold-hilted sword, his imposing presence and magnificent look, was to recognise in him one of those superior beings predestined by their antique nobility and purity of blood to govern people.

Thus equitable Nature had put him at the head of a principality.

Rembrandt stood on the threshold of his house to receive his visitor, dressed in blue broadcloth, with a wide-brimmed Flemish hat and the ruddy vulgar face so well known.

The prince's carrosse stopped in the open street.

A steward—dressed in black ratteen, thin as a distaff, his spine awry, his cheeks pale and wrinkled, a cast in his eyes, a pointed nose, and a simpering mouth—followed Monseigneur the Prince of Hesse-Cassel. The sight of this personage, holding in his hand a long money-bag filled with ducats, was pleasant to the eyes of Rembrandt.

"Well, Master," said the Prince, "we have come in person to take away your magnificent picture of 'Abraham's Sacrifice.' It's a conquest worthy of us."

"Monseigneur," replied the painter, with a caustic glance, "against a mule laden with gold there is no fortress strong enough to hold out."

"Ha! ha! You take my steward for a quadruped, then?"

"I was speaking of the money-bag," said Rembrandt; "the animal is only a detail."

The steward made a grimace.

"The deuce, Master Rembrandt! You are malicious," replied the Prince. "Defend yourself, Master Genodet."

"Monseigneur," replied the steward, "I never allow myself to talk before your Highness."

"No," thought the artist, "he prefers to rob his Highness of his crowns in silence."

They entered the studio.

To secure the best effect, Rembrandt had hung his picture against the wall in the most favourable light; more than this, he had covered it with a green cloth, hoping to enjoy the Prince's surprise, when he should withdraw this covering.

"Will you place yourself here, Monseigneur?" he said. "The picture hangs there; I am about to uncover it."

The Prince of Hesse-Cassel, with noble deference, placed himself in the position indicated; and Rembrandt, full of ardour, lifted the curtain. Consternation! The picture had disappeared!

Monseigneur at once conceived that a joke had been played off upon him.

For a moment Rembrandt thought that his senses had deserted him; he raised both his hands to his forehead and stood as if transfixed. Then, like a madman, he rushed about the studio, knocking, searching, overthrowing everything in the place, and crying—

"My picture! Where is my picture?"

"Master Rembrandt," cried the Prince, "are you playing a comedy? I am not to be taken in by your acting!"

An infernal smile curled the steward's thin lips.

The sight of this, in addition to the Prince's exasperating speech, raised Rembrandt's fury to the highest degree.

"I play a comedy?" he cried. "I've been robbed! pillaged! *I* make dupes!"

So loudly did he raise his voice that both Louise and Titus rushed into the studio in alarm. He sprang towards them, yelling—

"Is it you—is it you who have taken away my picture?" he cried, seizing Titus by the collar.

"What picture?" asked his son.

"It *is* you! There is nobody else in the house! Come, come, Titus, you intended to play me a trick—that was all. I forgive you. But tell me instantly, where is the picture?"

"I swear to you, father, you are altogether in error."

"Wretch! Do you deny it?"

And he was about to strike his son, when Louise rushed between them.

"Brother," she cried, "you know that he is incapable of doing such a thing."

"You defend him! It's yourself, then!"

"Me!" exclaimed the poor woman, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, Rembrandt, you can't think that!"

The painter sank down upon a chair without uttering another word. He was completely overcome.

"Let us leave this place," said the Prince, with a superb gesture; "the scene is ignoble, and doubtless had been arranged in some low tavern. The picture has

been sold. I am angry with myself for allowing my boots to be soiled in the house of such scum."

He left the place with a majestic step, the steward trotting after him. A few seconds later, his carrosse rattled over the stones of the Jews' Street.

## V.

The unforeseen and incomprehensible disappearance of his picture threw Rembrandt into a state of gloomy despair. For a long time he could not return to his work. At table he cast on Louise and Titus looks full of suspicion, and only opened his mouth to complain of traitors and ingrates.

"Yes," he said, "one believes one has a sister and a devoted son, and puts entire trust in them—only to find that they are one's greatest enemies. In whom can one confide? The honest man is the prey of scamps and thieves. His own family trade upon him and eat him up—his very confidence is turned against him!"

Poor Louise held her tongue. What could be said to a man so tormented by suspicion?

Sometimes, pursued by an indescribable terror, Rembrandt mounted, descended, traversed a hundred times a day every hole and corner of his house, like a veritable madman. Often, also, he was seen in his courtyard, walking with a slow and grave pace, his head bowed, his arms crossed upon his chest, and muttering unintelligible words.

When his dogs ran towards him with lowered heads and tails wagging with pleasure,

"Back with you!" he would exclaim. "You too

are traitors! My thief fed you, no doubt, and you licked his hands as if they had been mine!"

At eight o'clock in the evening Rembrandt shut his door, put up the bar, and sent away Titus and Louise; then, with a long rapier in his hand, he placed himself on the watch in his courtyard, and remained there till sleep weighed down his eyelids, and compelled him to retire, cursing the weakness of his will that was incapable of resisting the impulses of nature.

However, in spite of his terrors, which bordered closely on madness, Rembrandt, at the end of a few weeks, betook himself once more to work, and finished his admirable picture of the "Meditative Philosopher," so profound in its melancholy, so truthful in its sadness.

One evening a loud knocking was heard at the outer gate; the painter went out and demanded who it was who knocked.

"It is I, Master Rembrandt," cried the voice of Jonas; "why the deuce do you shut yourself in so early? I want to say a few words to you."

Rembrandt opened a small hatch in the gate.

"Well, what have you to say?" he demanded, in a crabbed tone.

The face of the broker appeared, with its tanned skin and thousand wrinkles.

"Master," he said, "have you a picture to sell? I know of an amateur."

"Bring him to-morrow," replied the artist; "I've just finished a fancy piece."

"This amateur has addressed himself to me," said Jonas, "and—you understand——"

"Yes, I understand perfectly—you expect a commission; henceforth I intend to do my own business."

He shut the hatch and returned indoors.

In this way was poor Jonas dismissed; for the painter's humour, not of the pleasantest at any time, was become more crabbed than ever.

Though he could not work by lamp-light in the evening, Rembrandt rarely left his painting-room. The neighbours every night remarked a light there, and often a shadow fell upon the large red silk curtain.

What was the painter doing at that hour, when heavy sleep resembles death, when silence reigns near and far in the deserted streets, when the green eyes of the cat glow with an inner light, as if it carried a candle in its head? At this ominous hour Rembrandt was still awake. He raised a ponderous trap-door in the centre of the floor of the studio, and descended a few stairs. He trembled with excitement, and his eyes flashed, as he pushed his arms into a deep cavity, and, with a strong effort, drew forth an iron chest. He literally roared with pleasure, and a demoniac smile spread over his countenance. He raised the lid of the chest and gazed on the contents. Rembrandt, the miser, could not utter a single word; he was suffocated by emotion —his hands bathed in gold! At length he stammered forth—

"Ho! ho! my poor little angels! Ho! ho! ho! how happy they are! How they sing, my little angels!"

While pronouncing these senseless words, the miser poured his ducats from his hands in a trickling shower, making a dull sound—for the box was nearly filled with gold.

Suddenly his face became agitated, his eyes dilated—he stretched forward his neck—his mouth half opened;

terror was painted on every lineament of his features. He listened intently.

A faint sound was heard in the vestibule, like the creaking of stairs under a hasty tread.

Softly, softly, the miser pushed back the iron chest into its place, and reclosed the trap-door. His courage then returned to him; he sprang upon a poignard that hung on the wall, and, like a tiger bounding from his cage, rushed into the vestibule, exclaiming—

"Scoundrel! I have you!"

At the same moment a shadow glanced by the head of the stairs, and disappeared as by enchantment.

Rembrandt remained for a moment as if stunned. But a thought flashed upon his mind, and he flew to the room in which he had hung his new picture: the nail and the empty space alone remained!

Louise, startled from sleep, heard a wild and terrible cry. The poor creature trembled, and a cold perspiration spread over her limbs: she had recognised her brother's voice. To that ominous and unrepeated cry succeeded an intense—an unendurable silence.

In spite of her alarm, she had courage to get up and hurry to her brother's chamber.

The painter, supporting himself with his back against the wall, pale, livid, with clenched hands and failing legs, foaming at the mouth, and staring with unseeing eyes, appeared completely overpowered. He looked like a corpse standing upright.

Louise endeavoured to speak, but her tongue was frozen with terror, and no articulate sound passed her lips. It was as much as she could do to keep herself from falling.

Rembrandt slowly returned to consciousness. He

made a gesture, then heaved a long-drawn sigh. Life came gradually back to him, and with it fury.

"I've been robbed! robbed!" he cried.

"Brother!" cried Louise; "brother!"

He looked at her coldly.

"It's you, is it?" he said. "You were there?"

"I rushed here——"

"And Titus?"

"He is asleep, brother."

"Asleep? We'll go and see."

Rembrandt led the way to his son's chamber, Louise following him.

"Titus!" he cried, pushing the door.

No answer was returned. He drew apart the curtains of the alcove. The bed was empty!

He snatched the bolster from its place, stripped off the sheets, turned everything topsy-turvy. He could not at first believe the evidence of his senses. But doubt was impossible.

"Very well," he said in a sharp and concentrated tone, whilst a sinister smile passed over his lips; "I now know who has robbed me."

Louise burst into tears.

## VI.

Titus had spent the night at the tavern of the Francs-Soudards. Towards four o'clock in the morning — the first gleam of daylight was touching the chimney-pots with grey—our worthy young man, a little tipsy, was tranquilly making his way along the Jews' Street. Arrived in front of Rembrandt's gate, he

introduced a false key into the lock. He expected to see, as usual, the two dogs, his accomplices, spring joyously towards him. What was his astonishment, then, to feel a heavy and muscular hand seize him by the collar, and to hear the voice of his father exclaim—

"Wretch! I've got you!"

He was dragged into the house with such rapidity that he had no time to throw himself upon his knees and implore forgiveness.

Rembrandt and his son stood face to face in the middle of the studio; Titus with red cheeks and palpitating heart; Rembrandt pale, his eyes glittering with rage.

For some few seconds he remained silent. The young man felt a sort of shudder run down his spine.

"Father!" he cried, "I have behaved very badly, and deserve your reproaches——"

"My picture!" interrupted the painter, in a dry, hard tone of voice.

Titus saw clearly that it was no time for making pretty speeches; his knees bent under him, for Master Rembrandt held an enormous cudgel in his hand, and did not look the least in a jesting mood.

"My two pictures! Speak, thief; what have you done with them?"

"I have not got them, father," cried Titus, joining his hands supplicatingly.

"Where have you just come from?"

"From—from—the tavern."

"Ah! from the tavern," said Rembrandt, with a bitter smile. "You eat, drink, and gamble at the tavern, do you, wretch!"

No answer.

"You have nothing to say? You *do* eat, you *do* drink, you *do* gamble there? Who gives you the money?"

Titus hesitated.

"Who gives you the money?" roared Rembrandt. "Speak, rascal, or I'll smash you." He raised his great cudgel, and poor Titus felt the flesh on his back quiver with horror; but the painter lowered his arm and went on—"I know where you get the money: you steal my pictures to sell them."

"I don't steal, father; I borrow."

"Borrow!" yelled Rembrandt, with a fresh outburst of rage; "borrow!—of whom?"

Overcome by terror, Titus answered—

"Jonas lends me money."

"Jonas—a Jew, a usurer—lends you money! How much? How much?"

The poor fellow dared not name the whole sum; he confessed to half of it—five hundred ducats.

Hardly were the words out of his lips than Rembrandt gave him such a blow on the back with the cudgel that the unfortunate fellow sank down upon the floor, writhing with the pain, and crying out that he was killed.

But Rembrandt relentlessly seized hold of him, and dragged him into a room near at hand, having but a single grated window.

"Wretch!" he cried, "if you do not tell me where my pictures are you shall die here of hunger!"

He hastened out of the room, and fastened the door with a double turn of the lock.

With bruised back, Titus remained alone in this dark and narrow room, with no prospect before him but that

of an interminable fast. Strange contrast with the tavern of the Francs-Soudards!

On returning to the hall, Rembrandt met Louise. The poor woman's eyes were red, her cap awry, and altogether she was pitiable to see.

The painter looked at her as a wild boar looks at a dog.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"Brother, this unfortunate lad knows nothing about——"

"Listen to me," cried Rembrandt, interrupting her: "I forbid you to criticise my acts. If you *do*, I'll turn you out of my house!"

"I am not criticising; I only say——"

"You have nothing to say," he cried furiously. "Attend to your household affairs."

Louise retired, all in a tremble, and swallowing her tears.

When breakfast-time came she informed her brother.

"I shan't eat anything," he replied.

"And—Titus?"

"The wretch shall have nothing to eat either."

"Nor more will I," said Louise, retiring.

Towards evening a remarkable scene took place.

Titus was as hungry as a cannibal, and Rembrandt also, but he was obstinately determined not to eat a morsel of anything. Titus shouted that he was hungry. His father went to the door, and said to him—

"Where are my pictures?"

"I'm hungry!—I'm hungry!" was his son's only answer.

"So am I," murmured the painter, in a low tone; "so am I hungry!—and I know, by my own feelings, what his sufferings are."

At six o'clock, Louise announced supper.

"I tell you I'm not hungry!—shut the door; the smell of victuals offends me."

"And—he?" inquired Louise.

"He!—let him tell me where my pictures are, and I'll forgive him."

He pronounced these words in a loud voice, so that his son might hear them. But the only response of Titus was every now and then a kick at the door, and a repetition of his cry—"I'm hungry!"

"He's obstinate," said Rembrandt. "So much the worse; I shall be obstinate too. We'll see which of us gives in first."

In spite of his anger the painter was determined to submit to the same penalty he had imposed on his son. The father suffered, but the miser was inexorable.

## VII.

STRANGE agitation reigned in the house of Jonas.

Rebecca had waited up late for Titus; the rogue had not come, and the poor girl had at length gone to bed weeping.

For several days she had been affected with an indefinable uneasiness—heart-beatings and sighing. Nothing but the young man's presence seemed capable of calming her, even for an instant, and after he was gone she wept, lamented, and was unable to close an eye.

These symptoms announced a malady at once dangerous and extraordinary.

Titus having, as has been said, neglected to pay his little visit, these symptoms took alarming proportions.

In the morning, when Esther entered her young mistress's chamber, she found her pale and downcast; she yawned, sighed, and shivered.

"Heaven take pity on me!" she cried, "I am dying!"

"Dying!" cried Esther, "dying!—oh, don't talk in such a manner!"

"Yes, yes, I am ill—so ill!—so very ill!"

Esther hastened in alarm to inform Jonas, who hurried to his child's bedside.

At the sight of his daughter—hearing her sighs, and seeing her beautiful eyes brimming over with tears—the old man was filled with a terrible fear.

"Oh, my poor little Rebecca!" he cried, invoking the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "my child, my treasure, what ails you? Tell me! You have exposed yourself to a draught—you have committed some great imprudence. Tell me what?—hide nothing from me."

The only answer the poor girl made was to toss her arms, to bow her charming head languidly, while large tears, bright as the dewdrops of morning, glittered on the long lashes of her eyes.

Jonas rushed from the room in despair and out of the house, while Esther prepared for her mistress a cooling and quieting drink.

In the course of a few minutes Jonas returned, bringing with him Doctor Jérosonimus.

Imagine a man of from seventy to eighty years of age, meagre, tough, and dry as a stake. He is dressed in a long robe of green silk, the twelve signs of the zodiac represented on a red border, and all the constellations, embroidered in silver, distributed about the surface of this kind of cloak. Besides this, a tall pointed hat rises

perpendicularly from the doctor's head, a long white beard, equally pointed, hangs to his waist, and spectacles of fabulous size rest upon the end of his long thin nose. Jérosonimus looks over his spectacles, and his little black eyes shoot glances that penetrate into the very depths of your heart. Under his arm he carries a violet ebony box, inlaid with gold—a veritable movable druggist's shop. In fine, the carriage of this person is severe, his action imposing, his speech sententious.

He placed upon a marble table his magnificent box and opened it, displaying in a number of smaller cases, bags, phials, elixirs, opiates, and electuaries of a thousand different colours.

It was a beautiful display, and, at the sight of such an arsenal directed against all human maladies, the beholder could not fail to be impressed with the idea that Doctor Jérosonimus was a well, a cistern, an abyss of science.

"Here is hellebore," he said to Jonas, showing him a bag; "it is the antidote for madness. I culled it myself from the summit of the Himalayas. Here is manna, on which, for forty years, our ancestors were fed in the wilderness; it has all imaginable flavours. A priest, in Jerusalem, whose son I had saved from the plague, gave it me out of gratitude. Since the departure from Egypt, it had been transmitted, in a sealed bottle, from father to son, and from male to male, in order of primogeniture. Here is an elixir of long life, composed by myself, of the marrow of the antelope, the gall of the giraffe, and the brain of the sphinx. Here is water which will cause hair to grow on the soles of the feet. Here is——"

"Oh, Seigneur Jérosonimus!" cried the broker, "you are a man without compare, a sublime genius; you alone

can save my little Rebecca. Deign to look at the poor child, who is suffering indescribable pains."

Thus reminded of the object of his visit, Doctor Jérosonimus turned towards the bed on which Rebecca was lying, and with a slow, grave, majestic pace, advanced towards her.

"Nature," he said, "engenders numberless ills, but Science is stronger than Nature, and breaks down her decrees. My child, give me your hand."

Rebecca obeyed.

The doctor placed his thumb on the large vein and counted the pulsations, winked his little black eyes, and appeared to meditate; then, again looking at the patient—

"Your tongue," he said.

She opened her mouth and showed her beautiful teeth, white as pearls.

Jérosonimus stooped, fixed his spectacles firmly on his nose, gave a look into the young girl's throat, and then, shaking his head, said in a cracked voice—

"The case is serious."

All this time Esther and Jonas were making a thousand grimaces. When he said, "The case is serious," the broker raised his hands to heaven in mute despair.

"The case is serious," repeated Jérosonimus, "but there is still one remedy—one remedy alone—but one only! It is very fortunate, Seigneur Jonas, you came to me; no one else could have discovered the mysterious ailment with which your daughter has been attacked."

"Oh!" cried the old man, "save my child, and my gratitude shall reach the bounds of my poor fortune."

The doctor glanced round at the splendid furniture of the room, and smiled.

"What are your particular feelings, my child?" he asked.

At this question Rebecca burst into a fit of crying.

Over the face of Jérosonimus there immediately came a look of strange suspiciousness. He turned upon the young girl the look of a hawk, and a moment afterwards, a smile puckered his ironical lips.

"I must be left alone with your daughter," he said to Jonas.

Observing that Jonas hesitated, he pointed to a lock of his grey hair, the last that remained upon his bald and sterile cranium.

Jonas and old Esther left the room, but they stopped just outside the door. The cunning doctor then stooped towards Rebecca, and said to her in a confidential manner—

"When was the young man last here?"

"What young man, seigneur?"

"The young man you love."

"Titus?" she asked in astonishment. "Do you know Titus? Ah! he did not come yesterday!"

"That will do," he replied, and went and opened the door. "You may come in, Jonas; I have good news to give you. Your daughter is out of danger."

"Heaven be thanked!" cried the broker.

Doctor Jérosonimus interrupted this flow of thankfulness to whisper a few words in the old man's ear. Whatever these words were, they made the broker leap as if he had been suddenly lashed with the thong of a whip. He raised his clenched fist against the doctor, and cried—

"It's a lie! my daughter is incapable of——"

"She has just confessed it to me," replied Jérosonimus, coldly.

"Confessed!—impossible!"

Jonas sprang towards his daughter's bed, crying—

"It's not true—it's not true, what he has told me?—say it's not true!"

"What?" she asked. "What has the Seigneur Jérosonimus told you?"

"He says—he says—that you have confessed."

"I have confessed nothing, father," said Rebecca.

"Ah! I was sure of it!" cried Jonas; "she has confessed nothing!"

"How!" cried the doctor; "did you not admit to me that a certain young man—a certain Titus——"

"Yes, I owned that I am sad when he does not come to see me."

"When he does not come!" screeched the old man. "He comes here, then?—he has been here?"

"Often, father. He comes in the evening, and we laugh and talk together."

"Unhappy girl! unhappy girl!" cried Jonas, tearing his robe. "And you, you old hussy! why have you not told me of what was going on?"

In his rage he seized Esther by her grey locks.

"What!" cried the old sibyl in her shrillest tones, "haven't you always told me that Rembrandt's son was a superb young fellow?"

"Rembrandt's son!" cried Jonas; "Rembrandt's son! I recognise in all this the finger of Heaven!"

He rushed out of the room and through the streets of the city like one bereft of his wits. The doctor, Esther, and Rebecca thought the poor old man had gone out of his mind.

Jonas hurried towards the Jews' Street. Everybody turned to look after him. His legs, long as a pair of

stilts, stretched out behind him, while his long sharp nose cut the way before him; his tall pointed hat was perched on the back of his neck, and his dressing-gown swelled in the air. He might have been taken for a stork that had fallen from a house-top, and was making futile efforts to fly up again; everything about him, even to his wide sleeves that streamed in the wind, as he raised them with his bony arms, assisted to complete his resemblance to that singular bird.

Out of breath, he rushed into Rembrandt's court-yard.

## VIII.

Rembrandt had said to his son, "If you do not tell me where my pictures are you shall starve to death."

This terrible threat was in course of accomplishment. For forty-eight hours Titus had not had anything given him to eat. Stretched on the floor, pale, haggard, livid as a spectre, the poor fellow no longer even kicked at the door; he had become too weak to stand.

Rembrandt, seated in the passage outside, himself as weak and overcome as Titus, but with an inflexible will, and a glance that flashed with sombre fire, repeated from time to time—

"Wretch! say where my pictures are, and you shall receive a piece of bread."

The echo of the vestibule alone answered to his broken accents. He rose, and placed his ear against the door, looked through the keyhole, and murmured—

"He does not answer! Perhaps he is dead!"

Involuntarily his hand moved towards the key, but he sank down upon his seat again, exclaiming—

"I'm fasting as much as he! It is he who is obstinate! Oh, hunger! hunger! what suffering it is!"

Rembrandt threw himself back against the wall, closing his eyes and gnawing his lips.

"Wretch! if he would only speak we might both eat! The thief has my pictures! He has them, and will not give them up! The scoundrel, to borrow five hundred ducats!—five hundred ducats! Well, let him perish! I wish it were over!"

Other thoughts than these, however, followed in the miser's mind. His own sufferings gave him an idea of those endured by his son. What he loved best, after his gold, was Titus; so great was his fatherly affection, that he had not been able to condemn his son to undergo the ordeal of hunger without at the same time submitting himself to it. In these moments of relentment he cried—

"Titus! Titus! confess, and I will forgive you! We will dine off a roast joint together, we will drink some porter. I will forget all, Titus."

But, receiving no answer, the miser's rage returned again upon him.

Towards noon he was seized with a sort of hunger-fit; he rose from his seat, exclaiming—

"I can hold out no longer!"

At that moment the door was opened, and Jonas, bursting with exasperation, appeared on the threshold.

At sight of this man, to whom he attributed his son's misconduct, a terrible expression came upon Rembrandt's face. If he had not been so weak as hardly to be capable of walking, he would have sprung at the old Jew's throat and tried to strangle him.

Jonas, on his side, was not a bit less furious. His

long, yellow face, scored with wrinkles, expressed both indignation and despair.

His daughter's misfortune had put him in a passion, which the hooting of the crowd, to which his wildly-hurried passage through the streets had subjected him, had served to augment. To look at these two men—the one tall, thin, long-necked and beaky-nosed, the other short, thick-set, with yellow, flashing eyes—was to be reminded of a heron and a hawk about to fly at one another.

"Master Rembrandt," cried Jonas, "your son is a villain! He has dishonoured my daughter, my little Rebecca—an angel of purity and innocence!"

"And you, you old blackguard!" cried Rembrandt, "have led my son into profligacy! You have lent him money! Satan strangle you and your Rebecca together, you old scoundrel!"

"I don't come to demand my money," said the broker, "though I have advanced your son a thousand ducats."

"A thousand ducats!" roared Rembrandt. "It's a lie! You have only lent him five hundred."

"I can produce proofs, whenever they may be needed. But that is not the question now."

The miser turned livid.

"A thousand ducats!" he cried; and, in spite of his feebleness, he attempted to spring upon the Jew, but his powers failed him, and he fell back into his chair, repeating, "A thousand ducats!"

"I will sacrifice the money," replied the Jew, "if your son will consent to embrace the religion of Moses, and marry Rebecca."

"What!" cried Rembrandt, "what! my son become a Jew! Are you mad, you old knave?"

"Your son has seduced my daughter, and——"

Rembrandt uttered such a cry of rage as made the broker himself tremble.

"Take yourself off, usurer! Take yourself off, or I will tear you in pieces!"

Exasperation gave him incredible strength; he threw himself upon the old broker, and tried to throttle him. The Jew defended himself as well as he could, while retreating towards the door; and both struggled, yelled at, and abused one another, till the house was turned topsy-turvy. Attacked in front, the old Jew at last succeeded in opening the door, on the threshold of which he drew himself up, and, extending his arms, exclaimed, in solemn tones—

"Master Rembrandt, I, a poor old man, whose white hairs your son has dishonoured, I, unfortunate as I am, who ask of you nothing but what is just, and whom you brutally repulse, without regard to my age and my tears—I curse you! Yes, I curse you to the twentieth generation! May you be poor, spat upon, despised! May *dalés* inhabit your house, and eat you up!"

He crossed the courtyard while uttering the last words of this malediction, and covering his bald head with the skirt of his robe, for he had lost his pointed hat in the course of the conflict.

Rembrandt, exhausted by his efforts, and with his mind more than ever troubled, hurried to Titus's room and entered it. Titus had raised himself to listen to the sounds of the struggle. His father took him by the hand, without uttering a word, and led him to a cupboard; there he cut a loaf of bread into two parts, and gave one to his son. That done, he dragged him to the outer door, and thrust him into the street, saying—

"Never again let me set eyes on you: you have no ather, I have no son!"

## IX.

Titus did not at first realise the full extent of his misfortune. After dragging himself a few paces along the walls, he sat himself down upon a boundary-stone and ate the bread his father had given him. Then he went to the fountain, at the corner of the Jews' Street, and drank plentifully. Strength returned to him, his pale cheeks were reddened, his chest dilated, and his confused ideas returned to something more of orderliness.

The disappearance of Rembrandt's picture, his anger, the penalty he had inflicted, the appearance of Jonas, the words exchanged between the Jew and his father, all came back to his mind with striking distinctness, like the recollection of a dream at first forgotten. He recalled also his father's words: "Never again let me set eyes on you: you have no father, I have no son!"

Where was he to go now? What was he to do?

The canal ran close by. Titus looked towards it, even approached it with a thoughtful air; but the water was black and muddy, and he turned from it, saying—

"If it had been, at least, schiedam or porter, there might have been some satisfaction in drowning oneself in it; but in such horrible stuff as that—one must first have lost one's senses."

Mechanically he turned his steps towards the tavern of the Francs-Soudards, where he found a numerous party assembled—Van Eick, Van Hopp, and many others. They all received him with loud shouts of joy, and invited him to eat, drink, and play. A glass was

set before him, and he ingenuously related all that had happened to him since their last meeting.

A singular change immediately took place in both the bearing and the countenances of these joyous comrades. Little by little, they moved farther from him; his glass was empty, and nobody thought of refilling it.

"Tut, tut!" cried Van Hopp, with an insolent air, "such ridiculous stories won't go down here; you owed me my revenge the day before yesterday, and now you are trying to get off with a bungling excuse."

Titus swore, protested—stormed; but they were all against him.

"Besides," cried Van Hopp, "supposing what he says is true, I consider it very indecent of him to dare to come here and accept glasses of porter he can't return."

"Very true!" cried the others; "his conduct is contemptible!"

Van Eick pointed to the young man's glass, and Dame Catherine carried it away.

The flames of shame and rage mounted into Titus's face: he ground his teeth convulsively; the punishment they were inflicting on him was a thousand times harder to bear than hunger. He rose, and darted a terrible look at the wretches.

"Cowards!" he cried, "you insult me because I have no money!"

"Exactly so," replied big Van Hopp, with his stupid laugh; "you've a wonderful power of penetration. But if you'll take my advice, you'll take yourself off from here as quickly as you can—if you don't, we shall currycomb you like an ass, to give you a lesson in living."

Titus left the tavern, cursing heaven and earth, and pursued by shouts of heartless laughter.

This time the poor fellow had serious thoughts of rushing to the canal; but another idea entered his mind.

He walked on meditatively, his head down-bent, and with a hang-dog look about him.

"Yes, yes," he muttered as he went along, "Jonas has gold. My father will have nothing more to do with me; even if I went back, and he were to forgive me, I should lead the devil's own life; no more porter, no more schiedam, no more cards, no more dice-boxes. I'd rather, a thousand times, drink the canal. By the soul of Satan, chance shall decide for me! I'll throw myself at old Jonas's feet, and declare that the light of Judaism has penetrated my heart."

Thus resolved, and night having come, Titus found himself in front of the old Jew's house. He walked round it several times, but at length climbed over the garden wall, and gave his ordinary signal; this time, however, nobody answered it. Esther, no doubt, had been dismissed.

For more than three hours Titus paced the garden walks, looking up at the house, at the moon, whose pale rays streamed through the lacework of the foliage. The cold became nipping. Titus was desperate.

At length he fancied he saw a light passing along the windows. It was only an idea, for the barred shutters were too closely shut to allow of a ray of light being visible from the interior. However, he went up to the door, and pushed it with his hand. It opened.

Happy Titus instantly persuaded himself that the door could only have been left open on his account.

Joyfully he took his way up the stairs, in the midst of the darkness, and made for Rebecca's chamber. But just as he was stepping on to the landing-place, a door opened at the end of the long passage, and Jonas, in his shirt, and carrying a lamp in his hand, came towards him.

The young man's first thought was to fly; but he had not time, for the old man advanced towards him with surprising rapidity. He hid himself behind the door, hoping that the old man would pass without seeing him; but, on arriving near him, the Jew stopped and looked at him fixedly, his mouth tightly compressed, his eyes wide open, but dull, glaucous, void of intelligence—the eyes of a corpse.

The sight filled Rembrandt's son with indescribable horror; his hair rose on his head, and his teeth chattered. He tried to utter a cry, but his voice died in his chest.

After a moment's pause, Jonas, without speaking a word—without the motion of a single muscle or fibre of his long face, continued his nocturnal walk.

Titus saw in a moment that there was some mystery in this, and the desire to penetrate it as quickly took possession of him. Step by step he followed the Jew, with a courage far beyond what was natural to his character—in fact, controlled by some unknown power. He followed the old broker as if drawn along by the same current.

Jonas trembled, his long, bare, and yellow legs making immense strides. He opened a large oaken door, and darted into a dark room.

When Titus entered after him, he thought he was in the interior of a cathedral, so vast and lofty was the

room; the light carried by Jonas, incapable of lighting it to its full extent, shone like a bright spot in the midst of immensity. At the same time a strong smell of paint mounted to the young man's brain, and on the oak panels he perceived a large number of pictures symmetrically hung, extending from the floor to the roof.

Jonas had hurried to a set of ladder steps, up which he mounted as a cat might have done, holding on with one hand, and with the other raising his lamp, which threw a gigantic shadow into the depths of the vast room. On reaching the top of the steps, the old man straightened himself, and threw the rays of his lamp into a corner of the vaulted ceiling where hung—Rembrandt's picture, "Abraham's Sacrifice!"

Titus, on beholding the broker in this perilous position—his spine bent and thrown back—uttered an involuntary cry of terror—

"Jonas! Jonas! what are you about? Take care!"

At the sound of this voice, which rang through the building, the old man instantly turned, staggered, and clutched wildly at the wall; but his finger-nails found no hold, he lost his balance, the lamp dropped from his hand, and Titus, now plunged in darkness, heard a heavy fall, followed by a low groan.

Rembrandt's son felt frozen to the marrow of his bones, a cold perspiration burst out all over him, his knees bent under his weight. He succeeded, however, in gaining the door: there he sank down upon the stones, and fainted.

* * * * *

Several days passed.

Jonas's windows were no more opened; death-like

silence reigned in his vast dwelling. The municipal authorities of the good city of Amsterdam, informed of these facts, directed the Jew's house to be searched. The body of the broker was then discovered.

But the most astonishing part of the affair was that a great number of the remarkable pictures in Jonas's collection were recognised by artists or amateurs to whom they had belonged. All declared that these pictures had been purloined from them at different times, in a surprising and inexplicable manner; by order of the sheriffs, they were restored to their owners.

Rembrandt, in this manner, recovered his "Meditative Philosopher" and his "Abraham's Sacrifice." He recollected that the house he inhabited had been sold to him by the broker, and suspected the existence of some secret passage of communication; but all researches on this subject were fruitless. The death of Jonas, however, reassured him as to the future.

Titus and Rebecca retired to Bruges, and lived there happily together. The son of Rembrandt became a miser, like his father: from the reception given him at the tavern of the Francs-Soudards by his good friends Van Eick and Van Hopp, he had learned the value of money.

# THE BURIED TREASURE.

## I.

One night, in the month of September, 1828, Furbach, the worthy and respectable bookseller of the Rue Neuhauser, Munich, awoke suddenly and in astonishment at hearing footsteps in the garret over his bedroom. Somebody was pacing to and fro in trouble of mind; one of the windows in the roof was opened, and long-drawn sighs were breathed into the silence.

At that moment the clock of the Jesuits' chapel struck one, and, underneath Monsieur Furbach's bedroom, horses clattered and stamped in their stable.

The garret was occupied by the coachman, Nicklausse, a tall, good-humoured fellow from Pitcherland, dry, wiry, an excellent manager of horses, and not without education, having had some little schooling at the seminary of Marienthal; but simple-minded and superstitious to such a degree that he constantly carried about with him, under his shirt, a small bronze cross, which he kissed every morning and evening, though he was over thirty years of age.

Monsieur Furbach listened: after awhile the window was closed, the footsteps were stilled, the coachman's bed creaked, and all was silent.

"Ay, ay!" said the old bookseller, "the moon's at

the full to-night; Nicklausse is beating himself about the chest, and lamenting his sins, poor devil!"

And without troubling himself any further with the matter, he turned round on his pillow and went off to sleep again.

Next morning, about seven o'clock, Monsieur Furbach, his feet in his slippers, was quietly taking his breakfast, preparatory to descending to his shop, when two little taps sounded on his door.

"Come in!" he cried, considerably surprised at receiving so early a visit.

The door opened and Nicklausse appeared, dressed in a grey blouse, his head covered with a wide-brimmed mountaineer's felt hat, and his hand clutching a stout wild-apple cudgel, just as he had presented himself on first arriving from his village. He looked pale.

"Monsieur Furbach," said he, "I've come to ask you to give me my discharge. Thank Heaven! I'm at last going to be at ease, and able to help my grandmother Orchel, of Vangebourg."

"Have you come in for an inheritance?" asked the old bookseller.

"No, Monsieur Furbach, but I've had a dream. I dreamed of a treasure, between twelve and one o'clock, and I am going to lay my hand on it."

The good fellow spoke with so much conviction that Monsieur Furbach was completely taken aback.

"You've had a dream, eh?" he said.

"Yes, monsieur. I've seen the treasure as plainly as I see you, in a very low-roofed vault, in an old castle. There was the figure of a nobleman lying above it with joined hands, and a large iron pot on his head."

"But where was it, Nicklausse?"

"Ah! that I don't know. I shall first go in search of the castle; then I shall find the vault and the crowns. The gold pieces fill a coffin six feet long; I seem to see them now!"

The eyes of Nicklausse glittered in a strange fashion.

"Come, come, my poor Nicklausse—come, come!" cried old Furbach; "let us be reasonable. Sit down. A dream—very well, very well. In the time of Joseph, I don't say that dreams mayn't have meant something; but at this time of day things are different. Everybody dreams. I myself have dreamt a hundred times of riches, but, unfortunately, I have never found 'em. Think of what you are about; you are going to give up a good place, to run after a castle which perhaps has no existence."

"I have seen it," said the coachman. "It is a big castle falling into ruins: below it there is a village, a long, steep, winding road, a very old church. Many people still live in this part of the country, and a large river flows near."

"You've dreamed the whole of it, I've no doubt," said Monsieur Furbach, shrugging his shoulders.

A moment later, wishing to bring the man back to reason by some means or other, he demanded—

"Your vault—what was that like?"

"It resembled an oven."

"And you went down into it with a light, no doubt?"

"No, monsieur."

"But, if you had no light, how could you see the coffin, the knight, and the pieces of gold?"

"They were lighted by a ray of the moon."

"Come, that won't do! Does the moon shine in a vault? Your dream, you see, hasn't common sense."

Nicklausse began to lose his temper. He restrained himself, however, and said—

"I've seen it. I care nothing about all the rest; and, as to the knight, here he is," he cried, opening his blouse, "here he is!"

He drew from his bosom the little bronze cross suspended from a ribbon, and laid it on the table with an air of ecstasy.

Monsieur Furbach, who was a great amateur of medals and antiquities, was surprised at the strange and truly valuable workmanship of this relic. He examined it closely, and discovered that it belonged to the twelfth century. In place of the effigy of the Saviour, on the centre limb was represented in high relief the figure of a knight with hands joined in the attitude of prayer. No date was upon it.

During this examination, Nicklausse anxiously followed the bookseller's every gesture.

"It is very beautiful," said Monsieur Furbach, "and I should not be altogether astonished at your having looked at it until you had come to believe it represented a knight keeping guard over a treasure; but, trust me, the true treasure to be looked after is that of the Cross itself; the rest is not worth talking about."

Nicklausse returned no answer; only after he had passed the ribbon over his neck, he said—

"I shall go—the Holy Virgin will enlighten me! When Heaven wishes to do good to us we ought to profit by it. You have always treated me well, Monsieur Furbach, it is true; but Heaven commands me to be gone. It is, besides, time for me to marry; and I have seen there, in my dream, a young girl who seemed born expressly to become my wife."

"In what direction are you going?" asked the bookseller, who could not help smiling at such simplicity.

"Whichever direction the wind blows from," replied Nicklausse; "that's the surest way."

"You are quite decided?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well; then we must settle your account. I am sorry to lose so good a servant; but I have no right to hinder you from following your vocation."

They descended together to the counting-house, and, after consulting his books, Monsieur Furbach counted out to Nicklausse two hundred and fifty Austrian florins, the accumulation of his savings, with interest, for six years. After which the worthy man wished him good-speed, and looked out for another coachman.

## II.

For a long time the old bookseller related this strange story, laughing heartily at the simplicity of the folks of Pitcherland, and recommending them to his friends and acquaintances as excellent servants.

Some years later, Monsieur Furbach having married his daughter, Mademoiselle Anna Furbach, to the rich bookseller, Rubeneck, of Leipsic, retired from business. But he had so firmly contracted the habit of working, that although he was sixty years of age, inaction very soon became insupportable to him, and he made several pleasure-journeys into Italy, France, and Belgium.

In the early autumn days of 1838 he visited the banks of the Rhine. He was a little keen-eyed old man, with red cheeks and a carriage still erect. He was to be seen

trotting about the deck of the steamer, his nose in the air, his overcoat tightly buttoned, an umbrella under his arm, and a silk cap drawn over his ears, chatting and asking about everything, taking notes, and freely consulting his guide-book.

One morning, between Frisenheim and Neubourg, after having spent the night in the cabin of the dampfschiff, in company with thirty other passengers —women, children, tourists, tradesmen—heaped upon the benches, Monsieur Furbach, happy to escape from such a vapour-bath, went upon deck at break of day.

It was about four o'clock in the morning, and a heavy mist hung upon the river. The steam roared, the vessel chopped slowly along, a few distant lights trembled in the midst, and at times loud noises arose amid the darkness; but dominating all was the voice of old Rhine, recounting the eternal legend of the generations which had passed away, the crimes, the exploits, the grandeur and the fall of those ancient margraves, whose lairs were becoming distinguishable in the awakening light.

Leaning thoughtful-eyed against the side of the vessel, the old bookseller saw these memories defile before him; some sparks flew into the air; a lantern swung at the end of its cord; the breeze threw jets of spray before it. Other passengers glided like shadows up from the cabin.

Monsieur Furbach having turned his head, perceived a dark mass of ruins on the right bank of the stream, and a number of small houses, ranged step-like at the foot of vast ramparts; a flying bridge swept the frothy river with its long dragging rope.

He went under the lantern, opened his guide-book and read: "Vieux Brisach, Brisacum and Brisacus mons, founded by Drusus; formerly the capital of Brisgau, passed for being one of the strongest towns in Europe: the key of Germany. Bernard V. de Zoehringen built the fortified castle. Frederic Barbarossa caused the relics of Saint Gervais and Saint Protais to be transported there, into the church of Saint Etienne. Gustave Horn, a Swede, tried to take it in 1633, after having gained great advantages over the Imperialists: he failed. Brisach was ceded to France by the treaty of Westphalia; it was given back at the peace of Ruyswick, in exchange for Strasbourg. It was burnt by the French in 1793; its fortifications were demolished in 1814."

"So," said he to himself, "this is the Old Brisach of the Counts of Eberstein, of Osgau, of Zoehringen, of Suabia, and of Austria. I can't go by *that* without seeing it."

A few moments later he descended, with his luggage, from the steamer into a boat, and the dampfschiff continued her passage towards Bâle.

There is not, perhaps, on either bank of the Rhine, a site more strange than the ancient capital of Brisgau, with its dismantled castle, its thousand-coloured walls of brick, rubble, and mud, planted fifteen or sixteen hundred feet above the stream. It is no longer a town, and yet it is not a ruin. The dead old town is overrun by hundreds of rustic cottages, that press upon its flanks, scale its bastions, and hang on to its fissures, into which the hungry and tattered population eat their way, like gnats and mosquitoes, and the thousand insects with nippers and borers, that take up their

lodgings in old oaks, and split, dry up, and reduce them to powder.

Above thatched roofs, ranged against the ramparts, still stands the gate of the fortress, with its sculptured coat of arms, its portcullis and drawbridge. Wide breeches allow the débris to stream down by the side of it; bramble, moss, and ivy join their destructive efforts to those of men! All is falling, all is passing away!

Vine-stems have taken possession of the embrasures, the goatherd and his goats boldly place themselves on the cornices, and, strange to see, the women of the village, the girls, and old gossips, put their faces out from a thousand holes made in the castle-walls; every cellar of the old fortress has been turned into a commodious dwelling-place, all that had to be done was to put skylights and windows into the ramparts. Shirts, red or blue gowns, all the rags, in fact, of these households, are seen fluttering in the air from their summits. Above all still stand a few solid edifices, some gardens, some large oaks, and the Cathedral of Saint Etienne, so much venerated by Barbarossa.

Throw over all these objects the grey tints of morning twilight, unroll below the scarce-visible expanse of the roaring river, picture to yourself rows of barrels and boxes on the broad stones of the jetty, and you will realise the impression made upon Monsieur Furbach as he set foot on the shore.

In the midst of a mass of packages he perceived a man with bare chest, and hair smoothed flat to his temples, sitting on the edge of a truck, the yoke upon his shoulders.

"Does monsieur stop at Old Brisach? Does monsieur

put up at the Schlossgarten?" inquired this man, eagerly.

"Yes, my good fellow; you may take charge of my luggage."

There was no need to repeat the invitation. The boatman received his twelve pfennings, and the traveller began the ascent to the ancient castle.

## III.

As the daylight increased in power the immense ruin gradually detached itself from the darkness, and its thousand picturesque details revealed themselves with strange distinctness. Here, on a partly demolished tower, formerly the signal-station, a flight of pigeons had taken up their abode; they were tranquilly preening themselves in the loop-holes whence, in other days, archers let fly their deadly arrows. In another place, an early-rising weaver pushed out of a donjon window his hanks of flax to dry in the open air at the end of long poles. Vine-dressers climbed the steep sides of the ascent; the cries of some martens pierced the silence: they were certain to abound in the ruins.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour, Monsieur Furbach and his guide reached a wide winding roadway paved with flints, black and slippery as iron, bounded by a breast-high wall, the curve of which was carried up to the platform. It was the ancient advance guard of Old Brisach. From the top of this roadway, near the gate of Gontran the Miser, leaning over the low wall, Monsieur Furbach looked down upon the innumerable cottages descending step-like to the river-

bank; their back yards, stairs, and worm-eaten exterior galleries, their roofs of shingle, thatch, and planks, and their little smoking chimneys. Housewives lighting their fires on the hearth, undressed children moving about the inside of these cottages, men blacking their boots; a cat wandering on the highest roof-peak; in a poultry-yard, six hundred feet below, some fowls scratching in a dunghill, and through the fallen roof of an old barn a litter of rabbits, their backs raised and their tails cocked up, frisking in the shade. All these things presented themselves to view, even in the dreariest nooks; human life, manners, habits, family pleasures and miseries, displayed themselves without reticence or mystery.

Yet, for the first time in his life perhaps, Monsieur Furbach found a mystery in these things: a feeling of undefinable alarm glided in upon his mind. Was it the multiplicity of the relations existing between all these beings, of which he could give no explanation to himself? Was it a feeling of the eternal cause presiding in the development of these existences? Was it the dull melancholy of these ramparts hastening to their destruction under the efforts of this infinite number of creatures? I know not. He himself could not have told; but he felt that another world in some way coexisted with the world about him; that shadows came and went as aforetime in the domain, while over all there was the life, the movement, the activity of the flesh. He felt afraid, and hastened after his truck. The keen air of the platform, on leaving the winding road, dispelled these strange impressions. While crossing the terrace, he saw, to his right, the ancient grey-red cathedral, still unshaken on its granite base as

in the time of the Crusades; to the left, some neat-looking private houses; a young girl giving chickweed to her birds, and an old baker in a dust-coloured jacket smoking at the door of his shop; in front, at the further extremity of the upland, the Schlossgarten Hotel, its white front standing out from the green background of a park. It was there that tourists going from Fribourg to Brisgau put up. It was, indeed, one of those excellent German hotels, simple, elegant, and comfortable, worthy to entertain even a travelling milord.

Monsieur Furbach entered the sonorous hall, where a pretty chambermaid received him, and had his luggage carried into a handsome bedroom on the first floor. There the old bookseller washed, shaved himself, and changed his shirt; after which, fresh, cheerful, and with a good appetite, he descended to the large public room to take his coffee according to his custom.

He had been about half an hour in this room—a spacious salle, hung with white paper ornamented with bunches of flowers, the floor sanded, high windows of shining glass, opening on to the terrace—and having finished his breakfast, was getting ready to start on a tour of inspection in the neighbourhood, when a tall man in a black coat, clean shaven and fresh-looking, a napkin under his arm, the master of the hotel in fact, entered, casting an eye on the tables, covered with their white damask cloths, and advanced gravely towards Monsieur Furbach, bowing as he did so with a ceremonious air; then looking up at him, he uttered an exclamation of surprise—

"Seigneur Dieu! is it possible? My old master?" Then with outstretched hands and eager voice, he

cried — "Monsieur Furbach, don't you recognise me?"

"It's Nicklausse!"

"Yes, Nicklausse," cried the landlord of the hotel; "yes, it's me. Ah, monsieur! if I dared——"

Monsieur Furbach had risen.

"Do not be afraid," said he, smiling. "I am happy, very happy, Nicklausse, to see you again so well off. Let us embrace, if it will be any pleasure to you."

And they hugged each other like old comrades.

Nicklausse wept; the servants flocked in; the good landlord rushed to the door at the end of the room, crying—

"Wife! children! come and see here! Make haste! My old master is here! Come quickly!"

A young woman of thirty, fresh, graceful, and handsome, a tall boy of eight or nine years old, and another somewhat younger, appeared.

"It's my master!" cried Nicklausse. "Monsieur Furbach, here is my wife—here are my children. Ah! if you would only bless them!"

The old bookseller had never blessed anybody, but he very willingly kissed the young wife and the little ones also, the younger of whom set up a-crying, under the belief that something distressing was the matter, while the other stared wonderstruck with all his eyes.

"Ah! monsieur," said the young wife, all flushed and agitated, "how many times my husband has spoken of you to me—of your goodness, of all he owes to you!"

"Yes," interrupted Nicklausse, "a hundred times I have been minded to write to you, monsieur; but I had so many things to tell you that required explanation. In short, you must forgive me."

"I forgive you with all my heart, my dear Nicklausse," cried the old bookseller. "Be sure that I am happy to know of your good fortune, though I know nothing of how it has come to you."

"You shall know all about it," replied the landlord; "this evening — to-morrow — I'll tell you the whole story. It is the Lord that has protected me! It is to Him I owe all! It's almost a miracle, isn't it, Fridoline?"

The young woman made a sign of assent.

"Well, well, all is for the best," said Monsieur Furbach, reseating himself; "you must allow me to spend a day or two in your hotel, to renew our acquaintance."

"Ah, monsieur, you are at home!" cried Nicklausse; "I'll go with you to Fribourg, and show you all the curiosities of the country; I'll conduct you myself."

The warm regard of these good people was not to be withstood; Monsieur Furbach was touched even to tears by it. During the whole of that day and the day following Nicklausse did the honours of Old Brisach and its environs. Whether he would or not, Nicklausse himself drove him about in a carriage; and as Nicklausse was the richest proprietor in the country, as he possessed the finest vines, the fattest pastures in the district, and had money invested on all sides, the astonishment of Brisach may be imagined at seeing him driving a stranger about in this manner: Monsieur Furbach passed for some prince travelling incognito. As to the service of the hotel, as to the good cheer, the wines and other accessories of the kind, I say nothing; all was splendid; the old bookseller could not but admit that he had never been treated more grandly,

and it was not without impatience that he awaited the explanation of the "miracle," as Nicklausse called it. The dream of his old domestic recurred to his memory, and appeared to him the only explanation possible of a fortune so rapidly acquired.

## IV.

At length, on the third day, towards nine o'clock in the evening, after supper, the old master and his coachman, finding themselves alone with some bottles of old Rudesheim before them, looked long and expectingly at one another. Nicklausse was about to commence his confidences when a servant entered to clear the table.

"Go to bed, Kasper," said he, "you can clear away these things in the morning. Only lock and bolt the outer door."

When the domestic was gone, Nicklausse rose, opened one of the windows of the room to freshen the air, then, gravely reseating himself, commenced his communication in these terms:—

"You remember, Monsieur Furbach, the dream that made me leave your service, in 1828. For a long while that dream pursued me; at one time I saw myself pulling down an old wall at the foot of a ruin; at another I descended the well of a winding staircase till I reached a sort of postern, and tugged at an iron ring in one of the paving-stones till I was exhausted with fatigue.

"This dream made me very unhappy, but when I had raised the flag-stone, and seen the cellar, the knight, the treasure, all my distresses were forgotten. I felt myself already master of the wealth, and I was

dazzled by it. I said to myself, 'Nicklausse, the Lord has chosen to elevate you to the pinnacle of honours and glory! How happy your grandmother Orchel will be to see you return to the village in a coach and four! And the others — old schoolmaster Yeri, sacristan Omacht, and all the people who said from morning to night that I should never do anything, how they will open their eyes, and what long faces they will pull! Ha! ha! ha!'

"I pictured to myself these things and others like them, that filled my heart to overflow with satisfaction, and redoubled my desire to become possessed of the treasure. But when once I was in the Rue Neuhauser, my bag on my back and my stick in my hand, and I had really to take the road to the castle, you could not believe, monsieur, how embarrassed I found myself.

"I was at the corner of your shop, seated on a stone, looking to see from which side the wind was blowing. Unfortunately there was no wind that day: the weather-cocks were all quite still, some pointing to the right, others to the left. And all the streets that crossed each other before my eyes seemed to say—'This is the way you must go!—No, this way!'

"What was I to do?

"I reflected till the perspiration ran down my back; at last, to give myself some fresh ideas, I went into the Coq Rouge, facing the Little Arcades, to get a drink of wine. I had taken good care to fasten my money inside a leathern belt under my blouse, for at the Coq Rouge, which stands at the beginning of Trois Copeaux alley, there are a good many worthy fellows who would have been happy to have relieved me of it.

"The low and narrow tap-room, lit by two casements

looking into a back yard, was filled with smoke. Men in smock-frocks, blouses, battered hats, or threadbare caps, moved about like shadows, and from time to time a match shone in the midst of the cloud; a red nose, downcast eyes, a hanging lip, became for an instant visible, then all again became dim.

"The tavern clattered like a drum.

"I seated myself in a corner, my stick between my knees, a can of drink before me, and till nightfall I stayed there, with open mouth and staring eyes, looking at my hat, that seemed to me painted on the wall.

"About eight o'clock I became hungry, and called for a saveloy and another can of wine. They lit the lamp, and two or three hours afterwards I woke as from a dream; Fox, the tavern-keeper, was standing before me, and said—

"'It's three kreutzer a night; you can go up to bed.'

"I was conducted to the top of the house, where I found a straw mattress spread on the floor, and the centre beam of the roof immediately over it. I heard two tipsy men in the next attic grumbling that they could not stand upright in it. For myself, I was doubled up under the roof, my head against the tiles.

"I did not close an eye all that night, as much through fear of being robbed as from the effect of my dream, and the desire of setting out, without knowing which way to go.

"At four o'clock the window set in the roof began to turn grey; the other occupants of the attics were snoring like organ-pipes. I descended the stairs backwards and escaped into the street. Hurrying away, I tapped my waist-belt more than a hundred times, to assure

myself of its safety. The daylight grew stronger; some servant girls were sweeping the pavements, and two or three watchmen, with sticks under their arms, were pacing the still empty streets. I was quickening my pace, breathing freely the fresh morning air, had reached the Stuttgard Gate, and could already see the trees of the country beyond, when it crossed my mind that I had forgotten to pay for my lodging. It was only three miserable kreutzer: Fox was the greatest rascal in Munich, harbouring all the vagabonds of the city, but the idea that such a man might take me for one of his own kind stopped me short.

"I have often heard say, Monsieur Furbach, that virtue is rewarded and crime punished in this world; unfortunately, from having seen so much of the contrary, I can no longer believe it. It ought rather to be said that, from the moment a man is under the protection of invisible beings, all that he does, whether through courage or cowardice, and even against his will, turns to his advantage. It may be regretted that veritable robbers often have such chances, but no matter; if well-off people were always happy, men might make themselves well-off by pocket-picking, and the Lord did not intend that.

"In short, cursing my ill star, I went back to the Coq Rouge. Fox was shaving himself in front of a bit of glass placed on the edge of his mantelpiece. When he heard me say that I had returned to pay him his three kreutzer, the fellow looked me through and through, as if he suspected some hidden diabolical trick; but after duly reflecting, and drying his beard, he held out his hand, thinking that three kreutzer are always worth taking. A fat servant wench, with

pumpkin cheeks, who was washing the tables at the moment, did not appear less astonished than he was.

"I was turning to leave the place, when my eyes fell on a row of little smoke-covered frames, hanging round the room. The windows had been opened to let in fresh air, and there was somewhat more light than on the day before, but that did not prevent the room being still murky. I have often thought since that at certain moments the eyes throw light on what they look upon, as if by an interior light, that warns us to be attentive. However that may be, I had already one foot in the alley, when the sight of these frames made me return. They contained engravings of views on the banks of the Rhine, engravings a hundred years old, dirty and fly-stained. Well—strange as it may seem—I saw them all at one glance, and amongst the number I recognised the ruins I had seen in my dream. I turned pale; for a moment I had not strength to mount upon a bench to look at the print more closely. Before a minute had passed, I had ceased to be in doubt: the three towers in front, the village under it, the river five or six hundred feet below, all were there! I read at the foot of the print, in old German characters: 'Views of the Rhine,—Brisach.' And, in one corner: 'Frederich sculpsit, 1728.' It was just a hundred years old.

"The tavern-keeper observed me.

"'Aha!' said he, 'you are looking at Brisach; that's in my part of the country. The French burned the town, the beggars!'

"I came down from the bench and asked—

"'You come from Brisach?'

"'No, I belong to Mulhausen, some leagues from

that place—a famous country; in good years, they drink wine there at two kreutzer the litre.'

"'Is that far from here?'

"'At least a hundred leagues. One might almost fancy you had a notion of going there.'

"'It is very possible I may have.'

"I went out, and he followed me to the door, from which he jeeringly called after me—

"'Here!—I say! Before you set off for Mulhausen, try if you can recollect anything else you owe me!'

"I made no answer. I was on the way to Brisach. I saw there, in the dark depths of a vault, masses of gold. I already embraced them, took up handfuls of pieces and let them fall; they uttered a dull sound and little peals of laughter that made my blood turn cold."

## V.

"This, Monsieur Furbach, was how, after taking my departure from Munich, I safely reached Old Brisach. It was on the 3rd of October, 1828; I shall remember it all my life. That day I had started on my road early in the morning. Towards nine o'clock in the evening I came in sight of the first houses of the village; it poured with rain; my felt hat, my blouse, my shirt, were all soaked through; a breeze from the Swiss glaciers made my teeth chatter; I seem still to hear the rain falling, the wind hissing, and the Rhine roaring. Not a light shone in Old Brisach. An old woman had directed me up to the Schlossgarten; I had succeeded in finding the steps, and ascended, groping my way, and saying to myself: 'Heavenly Father, if you do not wish me to perish here, but will accomplish

towards a poor soul one quarter of your Divine promises, come to my aid!'

"For all that the water went on splashing, the foliage by the side of the slope shivered, and the wind hissed more fiercely the higher I mounted.

"After groping my way for twenty minutes along that winding road, in danger of falling over the side at every step, I saw before me a lantern, slowly advancing: it was dripping with rain, and cast its rays on the old wall.

"'Hilloa! who goes there?' cried a cracked voice.

"'A traveller, on his way up to the Schlossgarten,' I replied.

"'Very good—we'll see.'

"And the light, flickering and staggering, came towards me.

"Above it advanced a dull face, with a flat nose and livid and wrinkled cheeks, surmounted by an old sable cap, from which the whole of the fur had been worn away. A long emaciated arm raised the lantern to the level of my hat; for a few seconds we looked at each other in silence. He had clear grey eyes, like a cat, and eyebrows and beard as white as tow; he wore a great-coat of goat-skin, and grey canvas trousers: it was old Zulpick, the ropemaker, a strange being, living alone in his vault at the foot of the tower of Gontran the Miser. After spinning his ropes all day in the little Holly alley behind the church of Saint Etienne, without returning to the passers who wished him good-day any answer beyond a silent nod, he retreated into his dwelling-place, singing through his nose tunes of the times of Barbarossa, and prepared his supper himself; then, with his two elbows resting on the sill of his casement,

he gazed out at the Rhine, Alsatia, and the summits of the Swiss mountains, for hours together. He was met sometimes in the night, walking among the ruins, and sometimes, but rarely, he went down to drink kirschenwasser with the boatmen and raftsmen, at Daddy Korb's house on the jetty, facing the bridge. He would then speak of ancient times and relate old chronicles to these good fellows, who said among themselves: 'Where the deuce has old Zulpick learned all this, he who has done nothing all his life but twist ropes?'

"Zulpick never failed to attend high mass on Sundays; but, with singular vanity, he always placed himself in the choir, in the place of the ancient dukes; and, stranger still, the inhabitants of Brisach accepted as quite natural in the old ropemaker what they would have severaly blamed in any one else.

"Such was the man with the lantern.

"He looked at me for a long time through the rain that streaked the air, and in spite of my growing impatience.

"At length he said in a dry tone—

"'There is your way.'

"And, with bent back and thoughtful manner, he continued his downward road towards Daddy Korb's public-house, muttering to himself.

"As for me, wishing to take advantage of the last rays of the lantern, I climbed rapidly up to the terrace, where a light seemed to me to start from the ground: it was that of the Schlossgarten. A servant was still up; I reached the door of the hotel and knocked; the door was opened to me, and the voice of Katel cried—

"'Ah! Seigneur Dieu! what weather for travellers! what weather! Come in, come in!'

"I entered the hall, and she looked at me.

"'You'll want to change everything on your back, and you are not rich, I can see. Never mind, come with me into the kitchen; you shall have a good drink of wine and a piece of bread to eat, for the love of God. I'll try and find you an old shirt, and you shall have a warm bed.'

"Thus spoke that excellent creature, whom I thanked from the bottom of my soul.

"Once seated by the side of the fire, I supped like a veritable wolf; Katel raising her hands to heaven and watching me wonderingly. When I had finished she led me to one of the servants' rooms, where, after undressing myself, I was quickly sleeping under the protection of the Lord.

"I little thought then that I was going to sleep under my own roof. Who can foresee such things? What are men without the protection of the invisible beings? —but, being under their protection, what may not one hope for? Such thoughts as these, however, were far from my mind.

"Waking next day about seven o'clock, I heard the leaves rustling outside. Looking out of my window, which commanded a view of the park, I saw the dead leaves of the broad-spreading plane-trees dropping one by one on the deserted walks, and the mist spreading its grey clouds over the Rhine. My clothes were still damp, but I put them on all the same, and, a few moments later, Katel presented me to old Michel Durlach, the proprietor of the hotel, a man of eighty, with baggy eyelids and his face seamed with innumerable wrinkles. He wore a jacket of brown velvet with silver buttons, blue cloth breeches, black silk stockings, round-

toed shoes with wide old-fashioned copper buckles; he was seated beside the china stove in the principal room.

"As I had asked him to give me employment—for I had made up my mind to remain at Old Brisach—after having looked at me for a few moments he requested to see my livret, which he gravely set himself to read, with his big spectacles fixed on his blue nose, that looked like the bill of a crow. Every now and then he nodded and murmured—

"'Good!—good!'

"At length, raising his eyes, he said with a benevolent smile—

"'You may stay here, Nicklausse; you can replace Kasper, who leaves the day after to-morrow to rejoin his regiment. You will have to go down to the landing-place every morning and evening to see if there are any travellers, and bring up their luggage. I will give you six florins a month, with food and lodging; the generosity of the travellers will double your earnings, and, later on, if we are satisfied with you, we'll see whether something better can't be done for you. Are you content with the terms?'

"I accepted willingly, for, as I have told you, I was resolved to remain at Old Brisach; but what confirmed me in my resolution was the arrival of Mademoiselle Fridoline Durlach, whose large blue eyes and sweet smile carried away my heart. Fridoline, fresh, smiling, beautiful flaxen hair falling in wide plaits upon her snowy neck, a graceful form, hands rather large and plump, loving-voiced, such as I had seen her in my dream, scarce twenty, and already sighing, like all young girls, for the fortunate hour of marriage, such I then saw her.

"But on thinking of what I was, Monsieur Furbach —a poor domestic, dressed in a grey blouse, harnessed every evening to my truck like a beast of burthen, my head bent down, panting and melancholy, I did not dare to believe in the promises of the invisible beings; I dared not say to myself, 'Here is your betrothed, she who has been promised to you!' No, I dared not dwell on that idea; I blushed at it; I trembled at it; I accused myself of folly. Fridoline was so beautiful, and myself so destitute of everything!

"In spite of that, from the moment of my arrival at the Schlossgarten, Fridoline had felt an affectionate regard for me, or rather commiseration. Often in the evening, after the hard work of the day, when I sat resting beside the kitchen fire, downcast, with my hands on my knees and thoughtful-eyed, she would enter noiselessly like a fairy, and while Katel was washing up the plates and dishes, would look smilingly at me and whisper—

"'You are very tired, are you not, Nicklausse? The weather has been bad to-day. That heavy shower wetted you through. You work very hard, I often think—yes, very hard; but have patience, my good Nicklausse, a little patience; as soon as there is another place vacant in the hotel you shall have it. You are not fit to drag a truck; it wants a stronger and rougher kind of man than you.'

"And all the time she was speaking she looked at me with eyes so tender, so compassionate, that my heart trembled under their look; my eyes filled with tears; I should have liked to throw myself at her feet, to take her hands in mine, to press my lips upon them, and weep as I did so. Respect alone restrained me.

As to saying to her, 'I love you!'—I should never, never, have dared to do it. And yet Fridoline was to be my wife!"

Here Nicklausse suspended his recital—almost choked by emotion. Old Furbach himself indeed felt moved; he watched the good fellow weeping at these sweet memories; these tears of happiness touched him deeply, but he found not a word to say.

## VI.

At the end of a few minutes, Nicklausse's emotion being somewhat calmed, he went on—

"You can easily imagine, Monsieur Furbach, that during the winter of 1828, which was very long and severe, my fixed idea never left me. Picture to yourself a poor devil, a yoke about his neck, dragging his truck, morning and evening, down and up that immense roadway, that seems endless, between the bank of the Rhine and the terrace above. You know that flight of steps, on which all the winds of Switzerland and Alsatia pour down; how many times did I stop midway to gaze on those vast ruins, with the black cabins beneath, saying to myself, 'The treasure is in the midst of that—somewhere—I don't know where—but it is there! If I had found it, instead of having the rain beating in my face, my feet in the mud, and a rope about my waist, I should be seated before a good table, drinking good wine, and listening to the wind, rain, and hail storm out of doors, while thanking God for His bounties. And—more than all that—I should see a sweet face smiling on me!'

"These thoughts put me in a fever; my eyes pierced the walls—I probed with a glance the depths of the abyss, I sapped the foundation of every tower, the thickness of which I calculated from that of the upper portions.

"'Ah!' cried I to myself, 'I'll find it—I'll find it—I must find it!'

"A strange sort of attraction always drew my eyes towards the donjon of Gontran the Miser, facing the ascent. It is a tall stone building, crowned with heavy battlements, which stand out in strong relief on the Hunevir side. The donjon of Rodolphe stands close by it. Between the two is hung the drawbridge of the place, these towers forming, as it were, the jambs of a colossal gate.

"One circumstance more than all attached me to the tower of Gontran; it was that, at half its height, on a broad rough-hewn stone, is sculptured a cross surmounted by a helmet, and two gauntlets nailed in place of the Saviour's hands.

"You have not forgotten, Monsieur Furbach, the little cross I used always to carry about me, and which I showed to you the day I left your service; that cross appeared to me similar to the one on Gontran's tower; the helmet and the gauntlets were alike; and, moreover, every time I passed the tower I was seized with a fit of trembling. I felt overpowered by some strange force; fear took possession of me, and, in spite of my desire to penetrate this mystery, a death-like terror made me fly.

"When I was in my chamber in the evening, I looked on myself as a coward, and promised myself to have more courage next day; but the idea of finding myself

face to face with beings of an unknown world always overthrew my strongest resolutions.

"Besides, at the foot of this famous tower, in a vault of the halle d'armes, lived the old ropemaker Zulpick, who from the time of my arrival at Brisach had watched my every action. What did this man want with me? Did he suspect my projects? Was he himself possessed by the same instincts? Had he any clue? I could not divest myself of a vague apprehension on meeting him; between Zulpick and myself there evidently existed some sort of bond. What was its nature? I could not tell, and stood upon my guard.

"For three months I went on dragging my truck without venturing to take any fixed resolution. I became discouraged. It sometimes seemed to me that the spirit of darkness had been laughing at my credulity. I returned every night to the Schlossgarten, weighed down by an indescribable melancholy. Katel and Fridoline did not fail to ask me the cause of my sadness, and promised me better fortune. I was visibly growing thinner every day.

"Winter had come; the cold was excessive, especially in the clear nights, when multitudes of stars filled the sky, and the brilliant moon threw upon the snow the shadows of the great trees, with their thousand interlaced branches.

"Steamboats did not then exist. Large sailing-vessels performed the passenger service; they arrived at eight, nine, ten, eleven o'clock, often at midnight, according as the wind was more or less favourable. I had to wait at the landing-place, in the midst of the bales, the snow slowly falling and covering me like a block of stone; and when the vessel had passed I often

returned to the hotel without any luggage, for travellers in the winter are rare.

"One January evening I was sadly wending my way back. As a good deal of snow had fallen my truck made no noise. I had reached midway, and stopped, with my elbows on the low wall, at my usual spot, to gaze at Gontran's Tower. The weather had cleared up. Below me slept the village. The trees, covered with frost and snow, glittered in the moonlight. For a long time I stood looking down at the white roofs, the little dark yards, with their pickaxes, their shovels, their harrows, their ploughs, their frays of straw hanging to the sheds, their windows, against which the snow had piled itself. Not a sound came up to me, not a breath, and I said to myself, 'They are all sleeping; they are in no want of treasures! My God! what are we? Is there any need for us to be rich? Do not the rich die, as well as the poor? Cannot the poor live, loving their wives and children, warming themselves in the sun when it shines, and at the fireside when the weather is cold, as well as the rich? Do they require to drink the best wine every day to make them happy? And when all have dragged themselves for a few days on earth—looking at the sky, the stars, the moon, the blue river, the verdure of the fields and woods; plucking fruit from the bushes; pressing the grapes, saying to her they love, "You are the most beautiful, the gentlest, the tenderest of women. I shall love you for ever!" and dandling their little ones in their hands, kissing them, laughing at their chirping—when they have done all these things—which make up the happiness, the poor happiness, of this world!—do we not all, one after the other, descend, in white robes or in tatters, into the

same dark cavern, whence there is no return, and where one knows nothing more of what is passing? Is there any need of treasures, Nicklausse, for all that? Reflect, and calm your mind. Go back to your village; cultivate your little field, your grandmother's field; marry Grédel, Christine, or Lotchen; a fat, jolly girl, if you like; a thin and melancholy one, if you prefer it. Heaven knows there is no lack of them! Follow the example of your father and grandfather: go to mass; listen to monsieur le curé, and when the time comes for you to follow in the road all other people have gone, you will be blessed, and a hundred years from this time you will have become one of those excellent people whose bones are dug up with respect, and of whom it will be said—"Ah! in those days there were men. Now there are none but scamps to be seen!'"

"Thus in a dreamy mood I leaned on the wall, admiring the silence of the village, the stars, the moon, and the ruins, and mourning for the treasure I could not have.

"But suddenly, after I had been there a few minutes, something moved upon the platform opposite me, but three hundred feet above where I stood. A head slowly peered out, casting a look on the river, the landing-place, and along the steep winding road.

"I ducked down; my truck was hidden in a turning of the wall.

"It was Zulpick. He was bareheaded, and, as the moon was shining with all its brightness, in spite of the distance, I could see that the old ropemaker was moved by some strange idea. His wan cheeks were drawn in; his large eyes, overhung with white brows, sparkled; yet he appeared calm. After looking about for a long

time, he put on his old sable cap, which he had taken off to enable himself to see the better, and descended the steep path by Rudolph's Tower, where I speedily lost sight of him among the bastions.

"What was he doing in the midst of the ruins at such an hour? The idea suddenly flashed upon my mind that he was seeking for the treasure. Calm as I had been a moment before, I felt a rush of blood to my face. I slipped the yoke over my shoulders, and ran with all my might, the wheels of my truck making no noise as they passed over the snow. In a few minutes I reached an outhouse belonging to the Schlossgarten, seized a pickaxe, and ran back, following the track of the old ropemaker. At the end of a quarter of an hour I was in the castle-moat, tracking his footsteps in the snow. I pressed forward so quickly that, suddenly, at the turn of a heap of ruins, I found myself nose to nose with Zulpick, who carried a heavy crowbar, which he tightly grasped with both hands as he looked me in the face. He stood fixed as a statue, and there was a grandeur in his attitude that astonished me. He might have been taken for an old knight. The surprise took my breath away; but soon recovering myself, I said—

"'Good evening, Monsieur Zulpick. How goes it with you this evening? The cold's a little sharp.'

"Just then the clock of the old cathedral of Saint Etienne struck midnight, and every grave and solemn stroke of the bell resounded in the bastion. As the last stroke rang out, Zulpick demanded—

"'What have you come here for?'

"'Eh?' said I, embarrassed. 'I've come for the same purpose as yourself.'

"Then, in a grave tone, he cried—

"'By what right do you lay claim to the treasure of Gontran the Miser? Speak!'

"'Aha!' I replied; 'it appears that *you* know——'

"My heart beat violently.

"'Yes, I have read you; I have expected you.'

"'You have expected me?'

"But without answering me, he went on—

"'By what right do you claim anything here?'

"'By what right do *you* claim anything, Daddy Zulpick? If there is a treasure, why should it be yours more than mine?'

"'It's different with me—very different,' said he; 'for fifty years I have been in search of it.'

"And placing his hand upon his breast with a convinced air, he added—

"'The treasure is mine. I have acquired it at the cost of blood, and for eight centuries I have been deprived of it.'

"I thought then that he was mad; but guessing what was in my mind, he said—

"'I am not mad. Show me my wealth, since the knowledge of its existence has come to you from on high, and I will give you a good part of it.'

"We were at the foot of Rudolph's Tower, from which the old ropemaker had been endeavouring to break away one of the stones. A great number of other stones were piled close by.

"'He does not know the place,' I said to myself. 'The treasure is not here, I am sure of it. It must be inside Gontran's Tower.'

"And without replying to his question, I said to him—

"'Courage, Daddy Zulpick! We'll talk about this matter some other time.'

"I returned up the road that led to the terrace. While I was going along I recollected that the only entrance into Gontran's Tower was through the vault inhabited by Zulpick. Turning round, I called to him—

"'We'll talk about it again to-morrow.'

"'Very well!' he cried in a loud voice.

"He followed me for a considerable distance, with bowed head and downcast air.

"A few minutes later I was in my bedroom, and laid down to rest with a feeling of hope and courage such as I had not felt for a long time."

## VII.

"That night my dream, which had been growing fainter day by day, reappeared to me with imposing grandeur. It was no longer only the knight stretched upon the bronze cross I saw, but it was a complete, strange, and colossal history that slowly unfolded itself to my eyes. The great bell of the ancient cathedral of Saint Etienne tolled. The heavy red stones of the vast building, its vaults, its arches, and its spires trembled to their granite foundations. An immense crowd, all draped in cloth of gold and jewels, priests and nobles, pressed each other on the platform of Old Brisach, not the Old Brisach of to-day, with its rubbish, its ruins, and its cottages, but Brisach covered with noble buildings piled up to the clouds. In each embrasure of its wide battlements stood a man-at-arms, his

eyes turned towards the dim blue plain; and along the whole length of the winding road, down to the shore of the Rhine, was a file of shining pikes, halberds, and partisans reflecting the sunlight like mirrors. Horses stamped, far down the steep road, in dark gateways. Huge sounds rose from the plain. Suddenly transported to the top of a tower, I saw, far off, very far off, advancing on the stream, a long boat covered with a black pall having a great white cross in the middle. Every stroke of the funeral bell resounded from one tower to another, and passed in prolonged echoes into the depths of the ramparts. I became conscious that a great personage, an emperor or prince, was dead; and, as everybody knelt down, I tried to kneel also, but suddenly all disappeared. I had, no doubt, attempted to turn in my bed. A death-like silence succeeded to the tumult.

"After that I saw myself again in the vault, looking out of a loophole. In front was the drawbridge, Rudolph's Tower, and on the bridge a sentinel. 'You have not been deceived, Nicklausse,' said I to myself. 'Here, beyond question, is the tower of Gontran the Miser, and the old duke lies there!' Turning round, I saw the coffin and the old duke. It was not a skeleton, but a corpse dressed in a blue mantle sprinkled with stars and two-headed eagles embroidered in silver. I moved near. I looked at the ornaments with ecstasy. The mantle, the sword, the coronet, and the great chalice glittered in the light of a star that twinkled in the embrasure of the loophole. While I was dreaming of the happiness of possessing these riches the old duke slowly opened his eyes, and looked gravely at me.

"'It is you, is it, Nicklausse?' he said, without a muscle of his long visage moving. 'I have been for-

gotten for a long time in this vault. You are welcome. Take a seat on the edge of my coffin. It is heavy, and will not tumble down.'

"He held out his hand to me, and I could not refuse to take it.

"'God of heaven! how cold dead men's hands are!' said I to myself, shuddering.

"At that moment I woke, and found myself grasping the candlestick on the table by my bedside, the coldness of which had awakened me. The little panes of glass in my windows were white with frost.

"All the rest of the night I did nothing but try to remember my dream. Only the principal circumstances of it remained impressed on my mind; but I soon recovered it entire, real objects serving to recall every detail.

"I had to keep myself patient all that day until evening. On my way down to the landing-place with my truck, at six o'clock, I called at old Zulpick's, and told him that I should be back between eight and nine o'clock, and that then we would have a talk together. He answered me by a nod of the head, and pointed to the entrance to his vault.

"At nine o'clock the passage boat passed. Towards ten o'clock I was on my way back. As soon as I had put up my truck in the shed, I went to Gontran's Tower. Zulpick was waiting for me. We descended in silence, and from that instant I was convinced that the moment of our great discovery was near, for the stairs down which I was going I remembered as those I had passed down in my dream; but I said nothing about it to Zulpick. On reaching the bottom of the vault all my doubts, if I had still had any, must have

ceased. I recognised the place—the low-arched roof, the old walls, the deal table resting against the loop-hole, the four round panes of cracked glass, the stump-bed, the bales of rope in one corner; I knew everything in Daddy Zulpick's burrow, and already had noted with my eye the flagstone that would have to be raised if we came to an understanding.

"A tin lamp shone on the table; the old ropemaker, without ceremony, sat himself down on a rickety rush-bottomed chair, the only one in the place, and pointed to a chest, on which I seated myself. Zulpick, with his bald head, two tufts of hair alone remaining just above his ears, his flat nose, glittering eyes, and pointed chin, looked restless and absorbed; he gazed at me with sombre eyes, and the first words he addressed to me were—

"'The treasure is mine, and I don't intend to be robbed of it. It is mine; I have won it. I am not a man to allow himself to be despoiled. Do you understand me?'

"'Very good, then,' I replied, rising; 'since it is yours, keep it.'

"I made a movement as if to leave the place.

"Springing from his chair, he seized me by the arm, and grinding his teeth while he spoke, cried—

"'How much do you want?'

"'Half.'

"'Half!' cried he, 'it's abominable!—a robbery.'

"'Keep it all, then.'

"I mounted one of the stairs.

"Almost tearing off the tail of my smock-frock, he roared—

"'You know nothing—nothing; you are trying to

suck me—to get over me! I shall find it by myself!'

"'Why do you detain me, then?'

"'Come, come, sit down,' said he, with a strange chuckle. 'Let us see, since you know—what does the treasure consist of?'

"I reseated myself.

"'In the first place, there's the golden coronet with six branches, four large diamonds in each branch, surmounted by the cross.'

"'Yes, there is that.'

"'Then there is the large gold-hilted sword.'

"'True.'

"'The gold cup, with white, red, and yellow pearls.'

"'Yes, yes, there is all that! I remember my cup, my sword, my coronet. They were left with me—I willed it so; but I want to see them again.'

"'Oh if you want to keep them all,' said I to myself, furious at such selfishness, 'if you want to keep them all to yourself, I shall take myself off.'

"And once more I was on my way out of the place; but again he seized me by the arm, crying—

"'We may yet come to terms. There's gold besides, isn't there?'

"'Yes, the coffin is full of gold pieces.'

"At these words he became perfectly green, and exclaimed—

"'I keep the gold; you shall have the silver!'

"'But there is no silver!' I cried; 'and besides, if there were, I wouldn't have it. Do you hear?'

"The old madman, in a fierce tone, supplicated and endeavoured to soften me; but it was easy to see that he would have tried to strangle me if he had felt

strong enough to do so, and had not stood in need of me.

"'Come,' said he, 'listen to me, Nicklausse—you are a good fellow; you do not want to rob me. I tell you the treasure belongs to me. For fifty years have I been searching for it. I remember having gained it, long, long ago. Only I cannot enjoy the sight of it. But what does that matter, since it is mine?'

"'Well, if it is yours, leave me in peace.'

"'You are going to dig it up!' he roared, springing towards a hatchet.

"Fortunately, I had in my hand my stout iron-pointed stick, having foreseen that things might take an unpleasant turn. I put myself on my guard therefore, and said to him coolly—

"'Daddy Zulpick, I came to you as a friend; you wish to murder me. But have a care, for at the least offensive movement you make I shall split your skull.'

"He understood me, and, after watching my movements for a moment, and debating within himself as to whether he were the stronger, he put down the hatchet, and said to me in a low tone—

"'You want half?'

"'Yes.'

"'Which half? The gold, the sword, the coronet? Which—which? Say!'

"'We'll divide the whole into two equal parts, and draw by lot.'

"He reflected for a moment, and then said—

"'I agree—I *must* agree; but you are robbing me; I leave that on your soul. May the devil strangle you! I can do nothing but accept!'

"'Is it agreed, then?'

"'Haven't I said I accept?'

"'Yes; but you must swear on this cross.'

"I then drew forth my little bronze cross. On seeing it his eyes appeared to be dazzled.

"'Where did you get that?'

"'What's that to you? Swear!'

"'Well, I swear—to leave you half.'

"'Equal division by lot?'

"'Yes.'

"'Very well,' said I, putting back my cross. 'Now we may arrange matters. In the first place, Daddy Zulpick, it is here.'

"'Here! Where?' he cried, stammering.

"'We must raise this flagstone, and then dig below it. We shall come upon a flight of stairs, and go down fifty steps. At the bottom there is a vault, and in that vault the treasure.'

"His eyes dilated as he listened to me.

"'How do you know all that?' he cried.

"'I know it.'

"'Are you sure of it?'

"'I am sure. You shall see.'

"I went and fetched my pickaxe from the end of the cellar. He bounded towards me, crying—

"'Let me raise the stone! Let me dig out the earth!'

"'Raise the stone and dig out the earth yourself, if you like, Daddy Zulpick; but remember your oath on the cross. You may break your oath once—twice would be too much.'

"He said nothing, but took the pickaxe and raised the stone.

"I stood erect near him, with my heavy iron-pointed stick, suspicious of what his madness might lead him

to do. Several times I remarked that he cast a rapid glance at me, to see whether I was on my guard. The stone raised, he set to digging with the rapidity of a dog scratching the ground. The perspiration rolled down his back. Once he stopped and said to me—

"'This vault is mine. I'll go no further. You must take yourself off.'

"'Remember your oath on the cross,' I replied coolly.

"He continued his work, repeating at every stroke of the pickaxe, 'You are robbing me, you are robbing me; you are a thief—all belongs to me,' until he had reached the vaulted roof of the stairs. On discovering the first stone, he suddenly became as white as a sheet, and sat down on the heap of earth. But on my attempting to take the pickaxe, he sprang up, stammering—

"'Let it alone!—I—I'll do it myself—I'll go down first!'

"'Very well; go on.'

"He went on with the work with a vehemence that left him no time to breathe. Fury was marked in his face. The work advanced, however; every stroke of the pickaxe now returned a hollow sound; suddenly a stone fell, and then the rest of the arch sank into the opening with a dull rush. The old ropemaker was in danger of being drawn down with the falling rubbish. Fortunately I seized him and held him back; but far from thanking me, scarcely had he seen the stairs than, with frightful exasperation, he roared—

"'All belongs to me!'

"'And to me,' I said drily.

"I had taken up the lamp; he demanded it.

"'Very good; I'd rather have it so. Go on first, Daddy Zulpick.'"

## VIII.

"We descended the stairs.

"The wavering light of the lamp fell on those vaults, ten centuries old! The stealthy sound of our steps on the sonorous stairs produced a strange effect on me. My heart thumped against my ribs as if it would have broken its way through. I saw before me the bald head, blue-grey neck, and bent back of the old ropemaker. Another in my place might have been tempted by the evil one; but, thanks to Heaven, an ill thought never came into my mind, Monsieur Furbach. I must tell you that, because death followed us, watching one of us in the shade. Happy are those who have nothing to reproach themselves with, and who leave to the Lord the care of removing His creatures from this lower world! He has no need of us for this terrible labour.

"Arrived at the end of the flight of stairs, Zulpick, seeing nothing in the vault, looked at me with haggard eyes; he tried to speak, but no sound came to his lips. I showed him the ring, let into the middle flagstone; he understood me, and placing the lamp on the ground, seized the ring with both hands, and uttered a wild roar. The perspiration rolled slowly down our temples; however, I remained master of myself. Seeing the uselessness of the old man's efforts—

"'Let me do it, Zulpick,' said I to him; 'you are not strong enough.'

"He tried to answer; at that moment I observed that his lips had become blue.

"'Sit down and take breath. I'll not steal your share; be easy on that score.'

"But he would not sit down, and squatted by the flagstone. And while I raised it by inserting the point of my pickaxe in the interstices of the stone, he tried to keep it in its place by tearing at it with his nails.

"'Take care!' I cried, 'you'll get your hands crushed.'

"Lost trouble! He did not hear; the fury of gold possessed him, and the moment the stone was raised, and while all my strength was employed in forcing it back, he slipped below, and I heard him uttering inhuman cries, mingled with strange gaspings.

"The stone raised, I remained for several seconds as if dazzled; the glittering of jewels under the rays of the lamp made me giddy. At that moment, with the rapidity of light, all my effaced recollections returned to me. I remembered even what you had said to me at Munich—'But if you had no light, how could you see the coffin, the knight, and the pieces of gold? Your dream, you see, hasn't common sense.' And for an answer to this objection, my eyes sought for some kind of light. It was then that I saw an opening in the wall. On the outside, this resembled one of those massive air-holes found in all ramparts, intended to carry off the humidity of the ground. The pale moon shone in through this aperture, and mingled its blue rays with the yellow rays of our lamp.

"This proves to you, my dear Monsieur Furbach, that at such moments our senses acquire an almost superhuman acuteness; nothing escapes them, not even the most trivial circumstances.

"Zulpick had seized the coronet from its mouldy purple cushion and placed it on his head with a haughty

air. In the same manner he took the sword, then the chalice, and looking at me—

"'Here is the duke,' he said solemnly, 'the old duke, Gontran the Miser!'

"And as I lifted a corner of the drapery, now stiff as cardboard, and the gold became visible, the old madman, raising the sword, tried to fell me by a blow on the head; but an indescribable gurgle escaped from his chest, and he sank down, uttering a long-drawn sigh!

"Seized with horror, I held the lamp to his face, and saw that his left temple was blue-black, his eyes turned in their orbits, and that a bloody froth was oozing from his lips.

"'Daddy Zulpick!' I cried.

"He did not answer.

"I soon became aware that he had been struck dead by apoplexy! Was it the sight of the gold? Was it for having broken his oath, in refusing me my share of the spoils? Was it because his hour had come, as ours will come? I knew not, and I did not trouble myself about it: fear of being surprised under such circumstances in presence of the body froze my blood. I should certainly have been accused of murdering Zulpick, that poor weak old man, for the purpose of carrying off his property. What was I to do?—make my escape and leave him there? That was my first idea; but while I was ascending the stairs, the distress of losing all those riches I had so long coveted made me go down again. I forced from Zulpick's hands the sword and the cup, which he held clutched in his stiffened fingers, and replaced them, with the coronet, on the coffin. Then taking Zulpick's body on my shoulder and the lamp off the ground, I

went up to the vault above. There I extended the old ropemaker on his stump-bed, and, after putting back the earth and rubbish, lowered the flagstone into its place. That done, I carefully opened the door of the vault and looked anxiously out. Everybody near was sleeping. It was not yet two o'clock in the morning, the moon spread the broad black shadows of Saint Etienne over the hardened snow. I escaped towards the Schlossgarten, and slipped into my bedroom through the park-entrance.

"Next day all Brisach learned that Zulpick had died of a stroke of apoplexy. He was buried on the following day, the old gossips of the village, the sailors, and the raftsmen, in procession, conducting him to the cemetery.

"For three weeks I continued to drag my truck. At the end of that time the sale, by public auction, of the vault, the stump-bed, and the chair of Zulpick took place; and as I still had by me the 200 florins I had earned in your service, I became the purchaser of all these effects for the sum of three goulden, which did not fail to astonish the neighbourhood, Monsieur Durlach included. How could a simple domestic have become possessed of three goulden? I showed to Monsieur Durlach the memorandum you had given me, and there were no more objections on that score. Very soon, indeed, a report was spread that I was a rich man, who dragged a truck as a penance. Others said that I had disguised myself as a servant for the purpose of buying the ruins of Old Brisach at a low price, and selling them again in one lot to the Emperor of Austria, who proposed to rebuild the castles of the Hapsburgs from bottom to top, in the style of the twelfth century, bringing back the old ritters, chaplains, and bishops.

Some, more practical, inclined to believe that I simply wanted to establish at Brisach a straw-hat manufactory, such as there were in Alsatia.

"From the time of my acquisition, Mademoiselle Fridoline was no longer the same to me; she did not know what to think of all the reports that were circulated concerning me, and appeared more timid and more reserved than hitherto. I saw her blush at my approach, and when I announced my intention of returning to my own country she became very sad. It even appeared to me the next day that she had been crying, a circumstance pleasant to me; for I had resolved to accomplish my dream entirely, and what remained of it to be done was not the least agreeable part.

"What more is there for me to tell you, Monsieur Furbach? The rest of my story is easily to be guessed. Shut up in my burrow at night, the door well secured, I again went down into the lower vault, and when I saw myself in full possession of the treasure, when I calculated these immense riches, and said to myself that for the future want could never reach me, how can I express to you the feeling of gratitude that took possession of my soul?

"And later, when I had effected at Frankfort the exchange of some hundreds of my gold pieces with Kummer, the banker, who was astonished at the antiquity of the coins, which dated from the time of the Crusades; and when I returned to Old Brisach, like a great personage, on board the dampschiff Hermann for the arrival of which I had so many times waited in the snow, how shall I describe to you the astonishment and delight of Fridoline, as, blushing and agitated, she saw me take my seat at the travellers' table; the

affectionate congratulations of Daddy Durlach, and the confusion of Katel, who had been used to treat me with a high hand sometimes, calling me a sluggard, when I appeared to her too melancholy and sighed by the corner of the hearth. Poor Katel! she had done it with the best intentions in the world, shaking me up a little to raise my courage; but now she appeared confused, speechless, and stupefied at having ill-treated the great personage she saw gravely installed at table, in his dragon-green witchoura, lined with sable.

"Ah! Monsieur Furbach, what singular contrasts there are in the world, and how wrong the old proverb is which says 'the frock does not make the monk!' It is useless to abuse money, seeing what a position it gives a man. I shall never forget that the moment I opened my trunk, and took out my cash-box and opened it on the table, good old Durlach, very prudent by nature, and who, until then, had somewhat doubted the solidity of my opulence, suddenly seeing the gold glitter, very respectfully took off his black silk cap, and said pettishly to Fridoline—

"'Come, Fridoline, bring the armchair for Monsieur Nicklausse: you think of nothing!'

"And when I told him that the dearest of my wishes was to obtain his granddaughter in marriage, he, who a few weeks before would have been indignant at such a proposition, and would very quickly have shown me the door, now appeared to be completely overcome by it.

"'Certainly, certainly, my dear Monsieur Nicklausse! You do us a great honour!'

"He made one condition, however, that I should remain at the Schlossgarten; 'not wishing,' he said,

'that an establishment founded by his grandfather should pass into the hands of strangers.'

"Fridoline, seated in a corner, wept silently.

"And when kneeling down before her I asked—

"'Fridoline, do you love me? Fridoline, will you be my wife?'

"The poor child was hardly able to reply—

"'You know well, Nicklausse, that I love you!'

"Ah, Monsieur Furbach, such recollections compel us to bless this despicable gold, by whose means alone such happiness is possible!"

Nicklausse paused, and for some time remained meditative, his elbow on the table, his forehead resting on his hand. He appeared to see all the happy and unhappy days of the past defile before his mind's eye; he was moved to tears. The old bookseller's head was bowed, and he too sat lost in reveries that were not at all habitual with him.

"My dear friend," he said suddenly, rising as he spoke, "your story is wonderful; but after reflecting on it, I own I can't make it out. Can it have been an effect of magnetism, the little cross you showed me at Munich having belonged to Gontran the Miser? Who knows? In any case, I know I shall have frightful dreams to-night."

Nicklausse made no reply: he had risen from his seat and lighted his old master to his room in silence.

The moon shone on the high windows of the room; it was nearly one o'clock.

The next day Monsieur Furbach went away to Bâle on the dampfschiff. He waved his hand from the deck in sign of farewell, and Nicklausse answered him with a wave of his hat.

# THE INVISIBLE EYE.

## I.

It was about this time, said Christian, that, poor as a church rat, I had taken shelter in the roof-loft of an old house in the Rue des Minnesängers, at Nuremberg.

I had made my nest in an angle of the roof. The slates served me for walls, and the roof-tree for a ceiling: I had to walk over my straw mattress to reach the window; but this window commanded a magnificent view, for it overlooked both city and country beyond. From it I watched cats gravely walking along the gutter, storks, with beak-loads of frogs, carrying food to their devouring young ones; pigeons with their tails spread fan-like, whirling above the depths of the streets below.

In the evening, when the church-bells called the people to the Angelus, resting my elbows on the edge of the roof, I listened to their melancholy song, and watched the windows lit up one by one; the good townsmen, smoking their pipes on the pavement; the young girls, in short red petticoats, and with their pitchers under their arms, laughing and chatting about the fountain of Saint Sćbalt. Insensibly all these objects faded from my view; the bats came abroad in

the dim air, and I lay me down to sleep in the midst of the soft quietude.

The old second-hand dealer, Toubec, knew the road up to my little den as well as I knew it myself, and was not afraid of climbing the ladder. Every week his goat's head, surmounted by a rusty wig, pushed up the trap-door, his fingers clutched the edge of the floor, and in a noisy tone he cried—

"Well, well, Master Christian, have we anything new?"

To which I answered—

"Come in: why the deuce don't you come in? I'm just finishing a little landscape, and want to have your opinion of it."

Then his long thin spine lengthened itself out, until his head touched the roof; and the old fellow laughed silently.

I must do justice to Toubec: he never bargained with me. He bought all my pictures at fifteen florins apiece, one with the other, and sold them again at forty. He was an honest Jew.

This kind of existence was beginning to please me, and I was every day finding in it some new charm, when the good city of Nuremberg was agitated by a strange and mysterious event.

Not far from my garret-window, a little to the left, rose the auberge of the Bœuf-gras, an old inn much frequented by the country-people. Three or four waggons, loaded with sacks or casks, were always standing before its doors; for before going to market the countrymen used to take their nip of wine there.

The gable of this auberge was conspicuous for the peculiarity of its form: it was very narrow, sharply

pointed, and its edges were cut like the teeth of a saw; grotesque carvings ornamented the cornices and framework of its windows. But what was most remarkable was that the house which faced it reproduced exactly the same carvings and ornaments; every detail had been minutely copied, even to the support of the sign-board, with its iron volutes and spirals.

It might have been said that these two ancient buildings reflected one another; only that behind the inn grew a tall oak, the dark foliage of which served to bring into bold relief the forms of the roof, while the opposite house stood bare against the sky. For the rest, the inn was as noisy and animated as the other house was silent. On the one side was to be seen, going in and coming out, an endless crowd of drinkers, singing, stumbling, cracking their whips; over the other, solitude reigned.

Once or twice a day, at most, the heavy door of the silent house opened to give egress to a little old woman, her back bent into a half-circle, her chin long and pointed, her dress clinging to her limbs, an enormous basket under her arm, and one hand tightly clutched upon her chest.

The physiognomy of this old woman had struck me more than once; her little green eyes, her skinny, pinched-up nose, the large flower-pattern on her shawl, dating back a hundred years at least; the smile that wrinkled her cheeks, and the lace of her cap hanging down upon her eyebrows — all this appeared to me strange, interested me, and made me strongly desire to learn who this old woman was, and what she did in her great lonely house.

I imagined her as passing there an existence devoted

to good works and pious meditation. But one day, when I had stopped in the street to look at her, she turned sharply round and darted at me a look the horrible expression of which I know not how to describe, and made three or four hideous grimaces at me; then dropping again her doddering head, she drew her large shawl about her, the ends of which trained after her on the ground, and slowly entered her heavy door, behind which I saw her disappear.

"That's an old mad-woman," I said to myself; "a malicious, cunning old mad-woman! I ought not to have allowed myself to be so interested in her. But I'll try and recall her abominable grimace—Toubec will give me fifteen florins for it willingly."

This way of treating the matter was far from satisfying my mind, however. The old woman's horrible glance pursued me everywhere; and more than once, while scaling the perpendicular ladder of my lodging-hole, feeling my clothes caught in a nail, I trembled from head to foot, believing that the old woman had seized me by the tails of my coat for the purpose of pulling me down backwards.

Toubec, to whom I related the story, far from laughing at it, received it with a serious air.

"Master Christian," he said, "if the old woman means you harm, take care; her teeth are small, sharp-pointed, and wonderfully white, which is not natural at her age. She has the Evil Eye! Children run away at her approach, and the people of Nuremberg call her Flédermausse!"*

I admired the Jew's clear-sightedness, and what he had told me made me reflect a good deal; but at the

* Flitter-mouse, bat.

end of a few weeks, having often met Flédermausse without harmful consequences, my fears died away and I thought no more of her.

Now, it happened one night, when I was lying sound asleep, I was awoke by a strange harmony. It was a kind of vibration, so soft, so melodious, that the murmur of a light breeze through foliage can convey but a feeble idea of its gentle nature. For a long time I listened to it, my eyes wide open, and holding my breath the better to hear it.

At length, looking towards the window, I saw two wings beating against the glass. I thought, at first, that it was a bat imprisoned in my chamber; but the moon was shining clearly, and the wings of a magnificent night-moth, transparent as lace, were designed upon its radiant disc. At times their vibrations were so rapid as to hide them from my view; then for awhile they would lie in repose, extended on the glass pane, their delicate articulations made visible anew.

This vaporous apparition in the midst of the universal silence opened my heart to the tenderest emotions; it seemed to me that a sylphid, pitying my solitude, had come to see me; and this idea brought the tears into my eyes.

"Have no fear, gentle captive—have no fear!" I said to it; "your confidence shall not be betrayed. I will not retain you against your wishes; return to heaven—to liberty!"

And I opened the window.

The night was calm. Thousands of stars glittered in space. For a moment I contemplated this sublime spectacle, and the words of prayer rose naturally to my lips. But judge of my amazement when, looking

down, I saw a man hanging from the iron stanchion which supported the signboard of the Bœuf-gras; the hair in disorder, the arms stiff, the legs straightened to a point, and throwing their gigantic shadow the whole length of the street!

The immobility of this figure, in the moonlight, had something frightful in it. I felt my tongue grow icy cold, and my teeth chattered. I was about to utter a cry; but by what mysterious attraction I know not, my eyes were drawn towards the opposite house, and there I dimly distinguished the old woman, in the midst of the heavy shadow, squatting at her window and contemplating the hanging body with diabolical satisfaction.

I became giddy with terror; my whole strength deserted me, and I fell down in a heap insensible.

I do not know how long I lay unconscious. On coming to myself I found that it was broad day. The mists of night, entering my garret, had dropped their fresh moisture on my hair. Mingled and confused noises rose from the street below. I looked out from my window.

The burgomaster and his secretary were standing at the door of the Bœuf-gras; they remained there a long time. People came and went, stopped to look, then passed on their way. Women of the neighbourhood, sweeping in front of their houses, looked in the direction of the inn and chatted together. At length a stretcher, on which lay a body covered with a woollen cloth, was brought out and carried away by two men, children, on their way to school, following them as they went.

Then every one else disappeared.

The window in front of the house remained open

still; a fragment of rope dangled from the iron support of the signboard. I had not dreamed—I had really seen the night-moth on my window-pane—then the suspended body—then the old woman!

In the course of that day Toubec paid me his weekly visit.

"Anything to sell, Master Christian?" he cried, as his big nose became visible above the edge of the floor, which it seemed to shave.

I did not hear him. I was seated on my only chair, my hands upon my knees, my eyes fixed on vacancy before me. Toubec, surprised at my immobility, repeated in a louder tone, "Master Christian!—Master Christian!" then, stepping up to me, tapped me smartly on the shoulder.

"What's the matter?—what's the matter?" he asked.

"Ah! is that you, Toubec?"

"Well, it's pleasant for me to think so! Are you ill?"

"No—I was thinking."

"What the deuce about?"

"The man who was hung——"

"Aha!" cried the old broker; "you saw the poor fellow, then? What a strange affair! The third in the same place!"

"The third?"

"Yes, the third. I ought to have told you about it before; but there's still time—for there's sure to be a fourth, following the example of the others, the first step only making the difficulty."

This said, Toubec seated himself on a box, struck a light with the flint and steel, lit his pipe and sent

out a few puffs of tobacco-smoke with a thoughtful air.

"Good faith!" said he, "I'm not timid; but if any one were to ask me to sleep in that room, I'd rather go and hang myself somewhere else! Nine or ten months back," he continued, "a wholesale furrier, from Tubingen, put up at the Bœuf-gras. He called for supper; ate well, drank well, and was shown up to bed in the room on the third floor which they call the 'green chamber;' and the next day they found him hanging from the stanchion of the signboard.

"So much for number one, about which there was nothing to be said. A proper report of the affair was drawn up, and the body of the stranger was buried at the bottom of the garden. But about six weeks afterwards came a soldier from Neustadt; he had his discharge, and was congratulating himself on his return to his village. All the evening he did nothing but empty mugs of wine and talk of his cousin, who was waiting his return to marry him. At last they put him to bed in the green chamber, and, the same night, the watchman passing along the Rue des Minnesängers noticed something hanging from the signboard-stanchion. He raised his lantern; it was the soldier, with his discharge-papers in a tin box hanging on his left thigh, and his hands planted smoothly on the outer seams of his trousers, as if he had been on parade!

"It was certainly an extraordinary affair! The burgomaster declared it was the work of the devil. The chamber was examined; they replastered its walls. A notice of the death was sent to Neustadt, on the margin of which the clerk wrote—'Died suddenly of apoplexy.'

"All Nuremberg was indignant against the landlord of the Bœuf-gras, and wished to compel him to take down the iron stanchion of his signboard, on the pretext that it put dangerous ideas in people's heads. But you may easily imagine that old Nikel Schmidt didn't listen with the ear on that side of his head.

"'That stanchion was put there by my grandfather,' he said; 'the sign of the Bœuf-gras has hung on it, from father to son, for a hundred and fifty years; it does nobody any harm, not even the hay-carts that pass under it, because it's more than thirty feet high up; those who don't like it have only to look another way, and then they won't see it.'

"People's excitement gradually cooled down, and for several months nothing new happened. Unfortunately, a student of Heidelberg, on his way to the University, came to the Bœuf-gras and asked for a bed. He was the son of a pastor.

"Who could suppose that the son of a pastor would take into his head the idea of hanging himself to the stanchion of a public-house sign, because a furrier and a soldier had hung themselves there before him? It must be confessed, Master Christian, that the thing was not very probable—it would not have appeared more likely to you than it did to me. Well——"

"Enough! enough!" I cried; "it is a horrible affair. I feel sure there is some frightful mystery at the bottom of it. It is neither the stanchion nor the chamber——"

"You don't mean that you suspect the landlord?—as honest a man as there is in the world, and belonging to one of the oldest families in Nuremberg?"

"No, no! Heaven keep me from forming unjust sus-

picions of any one; but there are abysses into the depths of which one dares not look."

"You are right," said Toubec, astonished at my excited manner; "and we had much better talk of something else. By-the-bye, Master Christian, what about our landscape, the view of Sainte-Odile?"

The question brought me back to actualities. I showed the broker the picture I had just finished. The business was soon settled between us, and Toubec, thoroughly satisfied, went down the ladder, advising me to think no more of the student of Heidelberg.

I would very willingly have followed the old broker's advice, but when the devil mixes himself up with our affairs he is not easily shaken off.

## II.

In solitude, all these events came back to my mind with frightful distinctness.

The old woman, I said to myself, is the cause of all this; she alone has planned these crimes, she alone has carried them into execution; but by what means? Has she had recourse to cunning only, or really to the intervention of the invisible powers?

I paced my garret, a voice within me crying, "It is not without purpose that Heaven has permitted you to see Flédermausse watching the agony of her victim; it was not without design that the poor young man's soul came to wake you in the form of a night-moth! No! all this has not been without purpose. Christian, Heaven imposes on you a terrible mission; if you fail to accomplish it, fear that you yourself may fall into

the toils of the old woman! Perhaps at this moment she is laying her snares for you in the darkness!"

During several days these frightful images pursued me without cessation. I could not sleep; I found it impossible to work; the brush fell from my hand, and, shocking to confess, I detected myself at times complacently contemplating the dreadful stanchion. At last, one evening, unable any longer to bear this state of mind, I flew down the ladder four steps at a time, and went and hid myself beside Flédermausse's door, for the purpose of discovering her fatal secret.

From that time there was never a day that I was not on the watch, following the old woman like her shadow, never losing sight of her; but she was so cunning, she had so keen a scent, that without even turning her head she discovered that I was behind her, and knew that I was on her track. But nevertheless, she pretended not to see me—went to the market, to the butcher's, like a simple housewife; only she quickened her pace and muttered to herself as she went.

At the end of a month I saw that it would be impossible for me to achieve my purpose by these means, and this conviction filled me with an inexpressible sadness.

"What can I do?" I asked myself. "The old woman has discovered my intentions, and is thoroughly on her guard. I am helpless. The old wretch already thinks she sees me at the end of the cord!"

At length, from repeating to myself again and again the question, "What can I do?" a luminous idea presented itself to my mind.

My chamber overlooked the house of Flédermausse, but it had no dormer window on that side. I carefully

raised one of the slates of my roof, and the delight I felt on discovering that by this means I could command a view of the entire antique building can hardly be imagined.

"At last I've got you!" I cried to myself; "you cannot escape me now! From here I shall see everything—the goings and comings, the habits of the weasel in her hole! You will not suspect this invisible eye—this eye that will surprise the crime at the moment of its inception! Oh, Justice! it moves slowly, but it comes!"

Nothing more sinister than this den could be looked on—a large yard, paved with moss-grown flagstones; a well in one corner, the stagnant water of which was frightful to behold; a wooden staircase leading up to a railed gallery, from the balustrade of which hung the tick of an old mattress; to the left, on the first floor, a drain-stone indicated the kitchen; to the right, the upper windows of the house looked into the street. All was dark, decaying, and dank-looking.

The sun penetrated only for an hour or two during the day the depths of this dismal sty; then the shadows again spread over it—the light fell in lozenge shapes upon the crumbling walls, on the mouldy balcony, on the dull windows. Clouds of motes danced in the golden rays that not a motion of the air came to disturb.

Oh, the whole place was worthy of its mistress!

I had hardly made these reflections when the old woman entered the yard on her return from market. First, I heard her heavy door grate on its hinges, then Flédermausse, with her basket, appeared. She seemed fatigued—out of breath. The border of her

cap hung down upon her nose, as, clutching the wooden rail with one hand, she mounted the stairs.

The heat was suffocating. It was exactly one of those days when insects of every kind—crickets, spiders, mosquitoes—fill old buildings with their grating noises and subterranean borings.

Flédermausse crossed the gallery slowly, like a ferret that feels itself at home. For more than a quarter of an hour she remained in the kitchen, then came out and turned her mattress-tick, swept the stones a little, on which a few straws had been scattered; at last she raised her head, and with her green eyes carefully scrutinised every portion of the roof from which I was observing her.

By what strange intuition did she suspect anything? I know not; but I gently lowered the uplifted slate into its place, and gave over watching for the rest of that day.

The day following Flédermausse appeared to be reassured. A jagged ray of light fell into the gallery; passing this, she caught a fly, and delicately presented it to a spider established in an angle of the roof.

The spider was so large, that, in spite of the distance, I saw it descend round by round of its ladder, then, gliding along one thread, like a drop of venom, seize its prey from the fingers of the dreadful old woman, and remount rapidly. Flédermausse watched it attentively; then her eyes half-closed, she sneezed, and cried to herself in a jocular tone—

"Bless you, beauty!—bless you!"

For six weeks I could discover nothing as to the power of Flédermausse: sometimes I saw her peeling potatoes, sometimes spreading her linen on the balustrade. Some-

times I saw her spin; but she never sang, as old women usually do, their quivering voices going so well with the humming of the spinning-wheel. Silence reigned about her. She had no cat—the favourite company of old maids; not a sparrow ever flew down into her yard, in passing over which the pigeons seemed to hurry their flight. It seemed as if everything were afraid of her look.

The spider alone took pleasure in her society.

I now look back with wonder at my patience during those long hours of observation; nothing escaped my attention, nothing was indifferent to me; at the least sound I lifted my slate. Mine was a boundless curiosity stimulated by an indefinable fear.

Toubec complained.

"What the devil are you doing with your time, Master Christian?" he would say to me. "Formerly, you had something ready for me every week; now, hardly once in a month. Oh, you painters! people may well say, 'Idle as a painter!' As soon as they have a few kreutzer before them, they put their hands in their pockets and go to sleep!"

I myself was beginning to lose courage. With all my watching and spying, I had discovered nothing extraordinary. I was inclining to think that the old woman might not be so dangerous after all—that I had been wrong, perhaps, to suspect her. In short, I tried to find excuses for her. But one fine evening, while, with my eye to the opening in the roof, I was giving myself up to these charitable reflections, the scene abruptly changed.

Flédermausse passed along her gallery with the swiftness of a flash of light. She was no longer herself:

she was erect, her jaws knit, her look fixed, her neck extended; she moved with long strides, her grey hair streaming behind her.

"Oh, oh!" I said to myself, "something is going on—attention!"

But the shadows of night descended on the big house, the noises of the town died out, and all became silent. I was about to seek my bed, when, happening to look out of my skylight, I saw a light in the window of the green chamber of the Bœuf-gras—a traveller was occupying that terrible room!

All my fears were instantly revived. The old woman's excitement explained itself—she scented another victim!

I could not sleep all that night. The rustling of the straw of my mattress, the nibbling of a mouse under the floor, sent a chill through me. I rose and looked out of my window—I listened. The light I had seen was no longer visible in the green chamber.

During one of these moments of poignant anxiety—whether the result of illusion or of reality—I fancied I could discern the figure of the old witch, likewise watching and listening.

The night passed, the dawn showed grey against my window-panes, and, slowly increasing, the sounds and movements of the re-awakened town arose. Harassed with fatigue and emotion, I at last fell asleep; but my repose was of short duration, and by eight o'clock I was again at my post of observation.

It appeared that Flédermausse had passed a night no less stormy than mine had been; for, when she opened the door of the gallery, I saw that a livid pallor was upon her cheeks and skinny neck. She had nothing on but her chemise and a flannel petticoat; a few locks

of rusty grey hair fell upon her shoulders. She looked up musingly towards my garret; but she saw nothing —she was thinking of something else.

Suddenly she descended into the yard, leaving her shoes at the top of the stairs. Doubtless her object was to assure herself that the outer door was securely fastened. She then hurried up the stairs, taking three or four steps at a time. It was frightful to see! She rushed into one of the side rooms, and I heard the sound of a heavy box-lid fall. Then Flédermausse reappeared in the gallery, dragging with her a lay-figure the size of life—and this figure was dressed like the unfortunate student of Heidelberg!

With surprising dexterity the old woman suspended this hideous object to a beam of the over-hanging roof, then went down into the yard, to contemplate it from that point of view. A peal of grating laughter broke from her lips—she hurried up the stairs, and rushed down again, like a maniac; and every time she did this she burst into fresh fits of laughter.

A sound was heard outside the street door; the old woman sprang to the figure, snatched it from its fastening, and carried it into the house; then she reappeared and leaned over the balcony, with out-stretched neck, glittering eyes, and eagerly-listening ears. The sound passed away—the muscles of her face relaxed, she drew a long breath. The passing of a vehicle had alarmed the old witch.

She then, once more, went back into her chamber, and I heard the lid of the box close heavily.

This strange scene utterly confounded all my ideas. What could that lay-figure mean?

I became more watchful and attentive than ever,

Flédermausse went out with her basket, and I watched her to the top of the street; she had resumed her air of tottering agedness, walking with short steps, and from time to time half-turning her head, so as to enable herself to look behind out of the corners of her eyes. For five long hours she remained abroad, while I went and came from my spying-place incessantly, meditating all the while—the sun heating the slates above my head till my brain was almost scorched.

I saw at his window the traveller who occupied the green chamber at the Bœuf-gras; he was a peasant of Nassau, wearing a three-cornered hat, a scarlet waistcoat, and having a broad laughing countenance. He was tranquilly smoking his Ulm pipe, unsuspicious of anything wrong. I felt impelled to call out to him, "My good fellow, be on your guard! Don't let yourself be fascinated by the old woman!—don't trust yourself!" But he could not have understood a word I said, even if he had heard me.

About two o'clock Flédermausse came back. The sound of her door opening echoed to the end of the passage. Presently she appeared alone, quite alone, in the yard, and seated herself on the lowest step of the gallery-stairs. She placed her basket at her feet and drew from it, first several bunches of herbs, then some vegetables—then a three-cornered hat, a scarlet velvet waistcoat, a pair of plush breeches, and a pair of thick worsted stockings—the complete costume of a peasant of Nassau!

I reeled with giddiness—flames passed before my eyes.

I remembered those precipices that drew one towards them with irresistible power—wells that have had to

be filled up because of persons throwing themselves into them—trees that have had to be cut down because of people hanging themselves upon them—the contagion of suicide and theft and murder, which at various times has taken possession of people's minds, by means well understood; that strange inducement, for example, which makes people yawn because they see others yawn—kill themselves because others kill themselves. My hair rose upon my head with horror!

But how could this Flédermausse—a creature so mean and wretched—have made discovery of so profound a law of nature? How had she found the means of turning it to the use of her sanguinary instincts? This I could neither understand nor imagine. Without more reflection, however, I resolved to turn the fatal law against her, and by its power to drag her into her own snare. So many innocent victims called for vengeance!

I began at once. I hurried to all the old clothes-dealers in Nuremberg; and by the evening I arrived at the Bœuf-gras, with an enormous parcel under my arm.

Nikel Schmidt had long known me. I had painted the portrait of his wife, a fat and comely dame.

"What!—Master Christian!" he cried, shaking me by the hand, "to what happy circumstance do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

"My dear Mr. Schmidt, I feel a very strong desire to pass the night in that room of yours up yonder."

We were on the doorstep of the inn, and I pointed up to the green chamber. The good fellow looked suspiciously at me.

"Oh! don't be afraid," I said, "I've no desire to hang myself."

"I'm glad of it! I'm glad of it! for, frankly, I should be sorry—an artist of your talent. When do you want the room, Master Christian?"

"To-night."

"That's impossible—it's occupied."

"The gentleman can have it at once, if he likes," said a voice behind us; "*I* shan't stay in it."

We turned in surprise. It was the peasant of Nassau; his large three-cornered hat pressed down upon the back of his neck, and his bundle at the end of his travelling-stick. He had learned the story of the three travellers who had hung themselves.

"Such chambers!" he cried, stammering with terror; "it's—it's murdering people to put them into such!—you—you deserve to be sent to the galleys!"

"Come, come, calm yourself," said the landlord; "you slept there comfortably enough last night."

"Thank Heaven! I said my prayers before going to rest, or where should I be now?—where should I be now?"

And he hurried away, raising his hands to heaven.

"Well," said Master Schmidt, stupified, "the chamber is empty, but don't go into it to do me an ill turn."

"I should be doing myself a much worse one," I replied.

Giving my parcel to the servant-girl, I went and seated myself provisionally among the guests who were drinking and smoking.

For a long time I had not felt more calm, more happy to be in the world. After so much anxiety, I was approaching my end—the horizon seemed to grow lighter. I know not by what formidable power I was being led on. I lit my pipe, and with my elbow on

the table and a jug of wine before me, listened to the hunting-chorus from "Der Freischutz," played by a band of Zigeuners from Schwartz-Wald. The trumpet, the hunting-horn, the hautbois, by turns, plunged me into vague reverie; and sometimes rousing myself to look at the woman's house, I seriously asked myself whether all that had happened to me was more than a dream. But when the watchman came, to request us to vacate the room, graver thoughts took possession of my mind, and I followed, in meditative mood, the little servant-girl who preceded me with a candle in her hand.

## III.

We mounted the winding flight of stairs to the third story; arrived there, she placed the candle in my hand, and pointed to a door.

"That's it," she said, and hurried back down the stairs as fast as she could go.

I opened the door. The green chamber was like all other inn bedchambers; the ceiling was low, the bed was high. After casting a glance round the room, I stepped across to the window.

Nothing was yet noticeable in Flédermausse's house, with the exception of a light, which shone at the back of a deep obscure bedchamber,—a nightlight, doubtless.

"So much the better," I said to myself, as I re-closed the window-curtains; "I shall have plenty of time."

I opened my parcel, and from its contents put on a woman's cap with a broad frilled border; then, with a piece of pointed charcoal, in front of the glass, I

marked my forehead with a number of wrinkles. This took me a full hour to do; but after I had put on a gown and a large shawl, I was afraid of myself: Flédermausse herself was looking at me from the depths of the glass!

At that moment the watchman announced the hour of eleven. I rapidly dressed the lay-figure I had brought with me like the one prepared by the old witch. I then drew apart the window-curtains.

Certainly, after all I had seen of the old woman—her infernal cunning, her prudence, and her address—nothing ought to have surprised even me; yet I was positively terrified.

The light, which I had observed at the back of her room, now cast its yellow rays on her lay-figure, dressed like the peasant of Nassau, which sat huddled up on the side of the bed, its head dropped upon its chest, the large three-cornered hat drawn down over its features, its arms pendent by its sides, and its whole attitude that of a person plunged in despair.

Managed with diabolical art, the shadow permitted only a general view of the figure, the red waistcoat and its six rounded buttons alone caught the light; but the silence of night, the complete immobility of the figure, and its air of terrible dejection, all served to impress the beholder with irresistible force; even I myself, though not in the least taken by surprise, felt chilled to the marrow of my bones. How, then, would a poor countryman taken completely off his guard have felt? He would have been utterly overthrown; he would have lost all control of will, and the spirit of imitation would have done the rest.

Scarcely had I drawn aside the curtains than I disco-

vered Flédermausse on the watch behind her window-panes.

She could not see me. I opened the window softly, the window over the way softly opened too; then the lay-figure appeared to rise slowly and advance towards me; I did the same, and seizing my candle with one hand, with the other threw the casement wide open.

The old woman and I were face to face; for, overwhelmed with astonishment, she had let the lay-figure fall from her hands. Our two looks crossed with an equal terror.

She stretched forth a finger, I did the same; her lips moved, I moved mine; she heaved a deep sigh and leant upon her elbow, I rested in the same way.

How frightful the enacting of this scene was I cannot describe; it was made up of delirium, bewilderment, madness. It was a struggle between two wills, two intelligences, two souls, one of which sought to crush the other; and in this struggle I had the advantage. The dead were on my side.

After having for some seconds imitated all the movements of Flédermausse, I drew a cord from the folds of my petticoat and tied it to the iron stanchion of the signboard.

The old woman watched me with open mouth. I passed the cord round my neck. Her tawny eyeballs glittered; her features became convulsed—

"No, no!" she cried, in a hissing tone; "no!"

I proceeded with the impassibility of a hangman.

Then Flédermausse was seized with rage.

"You're mad! you're mad!" she cried, springing up and clutching wildly at the sill of the window; "you're mad!"

I gave her no time to continue. Suddenly blowing out my light, I stooped like a man preparing to make a vigorous spring, then seizing my lay-figure, slipped the cord about its neck and hurled it into the air.

A terrible shriek resounded through the street; then all was silent again.

Perspiration bathed my forehead. I listened a long time. At the end of an hour I heard far off—very far off—the cry of the watchman, announcing to the inhabitants of Nuremberg that midnight had struck.

"Justice is at last done," I murmured to myself; "the three victims are avenged. Heaven forgive me!"

This was five minutes after I had heard the last cry of the watchman, and when I had seen the old witch, drawn by the likeness of herself, a cord about her neck, hanging from the iron stanchion projecting from her house. I saw the thrill of death run through her limbs, and the moon, calm and silent, rose above the edge of the roof, and shed its cold pale rays upon her dishevelled head.

As I had seen the poor young student of Heidelberg, I now saw Flédermausse.

The next day all Nuremberg knew that "the Bat" had hung herself. It was the last event of the kind in the Rue des Minnesangers.

# LEX TALIONIS.

## I.

In 1854, said Doctor Taifer, I was attached, as assistant-surgeon, to the military hospital at Constantine.

This hospital is built in the interior of the Kasba, on the summit of a pointed rock, some three or four hundred feet high. It overlooks the city, the palace of the governor, and the surrounding plain, as far as the eye can reach.

It is a wild and striking point of view. From my window, opened to the evening breeze, I could see the carrion crows and vultures sweeping about the face of the inaccessible rock, and hiding themselves in its fissures as the last rays of twilight faded away. I could easily have thrown the end of my cigar into the Rummel, which wound by the foot of the gigantic wall.

Not a sound, not a murmur disturbed the calm of my studies, up to the hour when the trumpet and drum awakened the echoes of the fortress, calling the men to their barracks.

Garrison life has never had any charms for me; I could never give myself up to the enjoyment of absinthe,

rum, or drams of brandy. At the time of which I am speaking, this was called a want of esprit de corps; my gastric faculties did not permit me to have this kind of esprit.

I limited myself, therefore, to my hospital wards, to writing my prescriptions, to the discharge of my duties: these done, I returned to my lodgings, made a few notes, turned over the leaves of some of my favourite authors, or reduced my observations to writing.

In the evening, at the hour when the sun slowly withdraws his rays from the plain, with my elbow on the sill of my window, I rested myself by dreamily observing the grand spectacle of nature, always the same in its marvellous regularity, and yet eternally new: a far-off caravan unrolling itself from the sides of the hills; an Arab galloping to the extreme limits of the horizon, like a point lost in space; a group of cork-oaks relieved against the purple streaks of the sunset; and then, far, far below me, the whirling of the birds of prey, ploughing the dark blue air with their cleaving wings, or, as it were, hanging stationary. All these things interested, captivated me. I should have spent there entire hours, had not duty forcibly carried me away to the dissecting-table.

Nobody troubled themselves to criticise these tastes of mine, with the exception of a certain lieutenant of voltigeurs, named Castagnac, whose portrait I must draw for you.

As I stepped from the carriage, on my first arrival at Constantine, I heard a voice behind me exclaim—

"Tiens! I bet this is our assistant-surgeon!"

I turned and found myself in the presence of an infantry officer, tall, thin, bony, with a red nose, a grisly

moustache, his képi cocked over his ear, and the peak of it pointed to the sky, his sabre dangling between his legs; it was Lieutenant Castagnac.

While I was yet endeavouring to recall this strange physiognomy, the lieutenant had seized my hand and shaken it.

"Welcome, doctor! Enchanted to make your acquaintance. Morbleu! you're tired, arn't you? Let us go in at once. I take upon myself to present you to the club."

The club, at Constantine, is simply the refreshment-room—the restaurant of the officers.

We went in; for how was the sympathetic enthusiasm of such a man to be resisted? And yet I had read *Gil Blas*.

"Garçon, two glasses! What do you take, doctor? Brandy—rum?"

"No; some curaçoa."

"Curaçoa! why not parfait-amour? He! he! he! you've an odd taste. Garçon, a glass of absinthe for me—a full one—lift up your elbow! That's it! Your health, doctor!"

"Yours, lieutenant!"

I was in the good graces of this strange personage.

I need hardly tell you that this intimacy could not charm me for long; I very soon observed that my friend Castagnac had a habit of being absorbed in the contents of the newspaper when the moment arrived for paying the reckoning. That tells you the sort of man he was.

On the other hand, I made the acquaintance of several officers of the regiment, who laughed heartily with me at this new kind of Amphictyon; one of these,

named Raymond Dutertre, a good fellow, and certainly not wanting in merit, informed me that on his joining the regiment the same thing had happened to him.

"Only," he added, "as I detest spungers, I told Castagnac as much before some of our comrades. He took the matter in ill part, and, faith, we went for a turn outside the walls, where I gave him a neat touch with the point, that did him enormous harm, for—thanks to a few lucky duels—he enjoyed a great reputation in the regiment, and passed for a regular taker-down of swaggerers."

Things were in this state when, towards the end of June, fevers made their appearance at Constantine, and the hospital receiving not only soldiers, but a large number of the inhabitants, I was compelled to interrupt my labours to attend to it.

Among the number of my patients were Castagnac and Dutertre; Castagnac was not suffering from fever, however, but from a strange affection called delirium tremens, a state of delirium and nervous trembling peculiar to individuals addicted to the drinking of absinthe. It is preceded by restlessness, inability to sleep, sudden shiverings; redness of the face and alcoholic odour of the breath are among its characteristics.

Poor Castagnac threw himself out of his bed, crawled about the floor on his hands and knees, as if catching rats. He gave utterance to terrible cat-cries, mixed with this cabalistic word, pronounced in the tones of a fakir in a state of ecstasy, "Fatima! O Fatima!"—a circumstance which made me presume that the poor fellow might at some time have been the victim of an unfortunate love-passion, for which he had consoled himself by the abuse of spirituous liquors.

Indeed this idea inspired me with a feeling of commiseration for him; it was something pitiable to see his tall thin body bounding right and left, then stiffening itself like a log, the face pale, the nose blue, the teeth locked; one could not be present at these crises without shuddering.

On coming to himself at the end of half an hour, Castagnac never failed to demand—

"What have I said, doctor? Have I said anything?"

"No, nothing, lieutenant."

"Yes, I must have said something. Come, don't hide anything from me!"

"Bah! how can I remember? Words without meaning! All sick people drivel more or less."

"Words without meaning!—but what were they?"

"Eh? how do I know? If you wish it, I'll make a note of them another time."

He turned pale, and fixed upon me a look that penetrated almost to the depths of my soul; then he closed his flaccid eyelids, compressed his lips, and murmured—

"A glass of absinthe would do me good."

At length he straightened himself out, his arms extended by his sides, and rested in stoical immobility.

Now, one morning, as I was going into the room occupied by Castagnac, I saw my friend Raymond Dutertre coming towards me, from the end of the passage.

"Doctor," he said, holding out his hand to me, "I've come to ask you to do me a service."

"With pleasure; that is, if I possibly can."

"I want you to give me a written permission to go out for the day."

"Oh, you must not think of such a thing! Anything else you like."

"But it seems to me that I am quite well. I have had no attack for the last four days."

"Yes, but fevers are raging in the city, and I cannot expose you to the danger of a relapse."

"Grant me only two hours—time to go and return."

"Impossible, my dear fellow; don't insist—it will be useless to do so. I know well the tedium of the hospital, I know how impatient the sick are to breathe the free air out of doors; but they must have patience; there is nothing for it but that!"

"You are positive, then?"

"Positive. In a week's time, if you go on we'll see about it."

He retired in a very ill-humour. I cared nothing for that; but as I turned round, what was my surprise to see Castagnac staring after his comrade, with a strange look in his eyes!

"Well," I said, "how are you this morning?"

"Very well," he answered sharply. "That's Raymond going along there, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"What did he want?"

"Oh, nothing; a written permission to go out, which I have refused to give him."

"Ah! you refused?"

"Of course."

Castagnac drew a long breath, and, as it were retreating within himself, appeared to relapse into somnolency.

I was seized with I know not what vague apprehension; the tone of this man had grated on my nerves.

That day one of my patients died. I had the body carried to the dissecting-room, and, towards nine o'clock, returning from my lodging, I descended the stairs leading to the amphitheatre.

Imagine a small vaulted room, fifteen feet high by twenty feet wide, its two windows opening out on the precipice bordering the high-road from Philippeville. At the back is an inclined table, and on this table the body I proposed to study.

After placing my lamp on a jutting stone let into the wall for the purpose, and opening my case of instruments, I began my work, which continued for nearly two hours without interruptions.

The rappel had long been sounded; the only sounds that reached me in the silence were the measured tread of the sentinel, his times of pausing, when he brought the butt of his musket to the ground; then, from hour to hour, the passing of the guard, the qui vive, the far-off whisper of the watch-word, the flickering of the lantern throwing a ray of light above the parapet—short, mingled sounds, the gradual dying away of which seemed to make the silence greater.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and I was becoming fatigued, when happening to look towards the open window, I suddenly beheld the strangest spectacle—a row of small grey owls, their feathers ruffled, their green squinting eyes fixed on my lamp, crowding on the edge of the casement and struggling for places.

These hideous birds, attracted by the odour of flesh, waited but my departure to swoop down upon their prey.

I cannot describe to you the horror which this apparition caused me. I sprang towards the window: they

disappeared into the midst of the darkness, like dead leaves borne away by the breeze.

But at that moment a strange sound fell upon my ear—a sound almost imperceptible in the void of the abyss. I bent downwards, my hand upon the window-ledge, peering without, and holding my breath to listen the better.

Above the amphitheatre was situated the chamber of Lieutenant Castagnac, and below it, between the precipice and the wall of the hospital, ran a ledge about a foot wide, covered with fragments of bottles and crockery, thrown there by the hospital attendants.

Now, at that hour of the night, when the least sound, the lightest breath, becomes perceptible, I distinguished the steps and gropings of a man making his way along this ledge.

"God send that he is not seen by the sentinel!" I said to myself. "Let him hesitate for an instant and he will fall, infallibly!"

I had hardly made this reflection when a hoarse and stifled voice—the voice of Castagnac—cried abruptly in the midst of the silence—

"Raymond!—where are you going?"

This exclamation thrilled me to the marrow of my bones. It was a sentence of death.

At the same instant some of the rubbish slipped from the ledge; then along the narrow way I heard some one clutching and breathing painfully.

Cold perspiration ran down my face. I tried to see—to descend—to call for assistance; but my tongue was frozen in my mouth.

Suddenly there was a groan, then—silence. I deceived myself: a burst of dry laughter followed—a

window closed abruptly with a noise of broken glass. Then silence, profound, continued, spread its winding-sheet over this fearful drama.

How shall I tell you the rest? Terror made me shrink into the most distant corner of the dissecting-room; my hair stood on end, my eyes were fixed and staring; for full twenty minutes I remained thus, listening to the beatings of my heart, and trying to restrain its pulsations by the pressure of my hands.

At the end of that time I went mechanically and closed the window; then I took up my lamp, mounted the stairs, and passed along the passage to my chamber.

I went to bed, but found it impossible to close an eye. I heard the sighs—the long-drawn sighs—of the victim, then the out-bursting laughter of his assassin!

"To murder on the highway, pistol in hand, is frightful enough," I said to myself; "but to murder by a word—without danger!"

The sirocco arose; it struggled on the plain below with lugubrious moanings, whirling even to the summit of the rock the sand and gravel of the desert.

However, the very violence of the agitation I had undergone brought with it an almost unconquerable need of repose. Fear alone held me awake. I pictured to myself tall Castagnac in his shirt, leaning out of his window, his neck stretched forth, following his victim with his looks into the dark depths of the precipice—and it froze my blood.

"It was he!" I said to myself; "it was he!—and what if he suspected I was there!"

Then I seemed to hear the boards of the corridor creak under the tread of a stealthy foot—I raised myself on my elbow, my mouth half open, and listened.

The want of rest, however, at length gained the mastery, and, towards three o'clock, I sank into a leaden sleep.

It was broad day when I awoke; the wind of the past night had fallen, and the sky was so pure, the calm so profound, that I doubted my recollection, and believed that I had had a villainous dream.

Yet, strangely—I felt a sort of fear of verifying my impressions. I went to my work; but it was not until I had visited all my wards, and leisurely examined all my patients, that I at length proceeded to Dutertre's chamber.

I knock at the door; no answer is returned. I open the door—his bed has not been slept in. I call the attendants and question them. I demand where Lieutenant Dutertre is—no one has seen him since yesterday evening.

Calling up all my courage, I enter Castagnac's room.

I discover at a glance that two panes of glass in his window have been broken. I feel myself turn pale; but quickly recovering my self-possession, I remark—

"That was a stiff puff of wind we had last night; didn't you think so, lieutenant?"

He was tranquilly seated, his elbows on the table, his long bony visage between his hands, and made believe to be reading a book of infantry-drill. He was impassible, and turned on me his dull look as he answered, pointing towards the broken window—

"Parbleu! two panes of glass blown in, that's all. Ha, ha, ha!"

"This chamber appears to be more exposed than the rest, lieutenant; or perhaps you had left your window open?"

"Faith, no," he replied, looking strangely at me, "it was closed."

"Ah!—and your health," I asked, going up to him to feel his pulse; "how is that?"

"I'm going on very well."

"Yes, there's a decided improvement—a little excitement, but, in a fortnight from this time, lieutenant, you will be well again; only then you must try to moderate—no more green poison, or look out!"

In spite of the tone of bonhomie which I compelled myself to adopt, my voice trembled. The arm of the old scoundrel, as it lay in my hand, produced on me the effect of a serpent. I felt a strong desire to run away. And then his fixed restless eye, which never turned from me! It was horrible! But I restrained myself.

Returning suddenly as I was leaving the room—as if to repair an oversight—I said—

"By-the-bye, lieutenant, Dutertre has not been to see you, has he?"

A shudder ran through his grey hair.

"Dutertre?"

"Yes; he has gone out—has been out since yesterday, and no one knows what has become of him. I imagined——"

"No one has been to see me," he said, with a short dry cough; "no one."

He took up his book again, and I closed the door, as certain of his crime as I was of the light of day.

Unfortunately I had no proofs.

"If I denounce him," I said to myself on regaining my room, "he will, of course, deny it; if he denies it, what proof of the fact can I produce? None! My un-

supported evidence will not suffice. All the odium of the accusation will recoil upon my own head, and I shall have made a terrible enemy."

Moreover, crimes of this sort have not been provided for by the law. I resolved, therefore, to wait—to watch Castagnac without appearing to do so, persuaded that, in the end, he would betray himself. In due course, I called on the commandant of the place, and simply reported to him the disappearance of Lieutenant Dutertre.

On the following day some Arabs, coming to the market of Constantine with their donkeys laden with vegetables, mentioned that they had seen, from the Philippeville Road, a uniform hanging high up on the rocks of the Kasba, and that birds of prey were flying about the spot by hundreds, filling the air with their cries.

They were the remains of Raymond. With infinite difficulty they were recovered, by means of cords and ladders.

For two or three days the officers of the garrison talked about this strange adventure; a thousand commentaries were made on the probable circumstances of the event; and then something else was talked about—or the games of bézique or piquet absorbed all spare attention.

Men every day exposed to perils have no great depth of sympathy for one another: Jacques dies — Pierre replaces him. The regiment never dies! It is the theory called Humanitarianism in action: "You are, therefore you will be; for, being, you participate in the eternal and infinite being!" Yes, I shall be—but what? That is the question. To-day a lieutenant of

chasseurs—and to-morrow a clod of earth. The subject is worthy of being looked at closely more than once.

## II.

My position, in the midst of the general indifference, was hard to bear; silence weighed on me like remorse. The sight of Lieutenant Castagnac filled me with indignation—a kind of insurmountable repugnance; his dull look, his ironical smile, froze my blood. He himself occasionally darted stolen glances at me, as if to read the depths of my soul; these furtive glances, laden with suspicion, did not in the least serve to reassure me.

"He suspects something," I said to myself; "if he were only sure, I should be lost; for he is a man who would not shrink at anything!"

These reflections imposed on me an intolerable restraint; my labours suffered by it, and I saw that I must emancipate myself from my state of uncertainty at any price. But how?

Providence came to my aid.

I was one day passing out of the hospital gate, about three o'clock in the afternoon, on my way into the city, when the corporal-attendant ran after me, to give me a small piece of paper which he had found in Raymond's tunic.

"It's a letter from a particulière called Fatima," the good fellow said; "it seems that this native was smitten with Lieutenant Dutertre. I fancied, major, the paper might interest you."

The reading of the letter greatly astonished me. It was very short, and did little more than indicate the

hour and place of a rendezvous; but what a revelation was in the signature!

"So, then," I said, "that exclamation of Castagnac's, in the most violent of his crises—'Fatima! O Fatima!' —was the name of a woman—and that woman exists! That woman loved Dutertre! Who knows? it may have been for the purpose of going to her at this very rendezvous that Raymond wanted me to give him a written permission to leave the hospital! Yes, yes; the letter is dated the 3rd of July; that was the very date! Poor fellow! not being able to quit the hospital in the day-time, he ventured at night along that frightful path—and then—Castagnac heard him!"

Reflecting on these things I descended to the foot of the rock, and soon found myself in front of a low brick-built vault, open to the air, according to the Oriental custom.

In the depths of this vault, a certain Sidi Houmaïum, armed with a long wooden spoon, and gravely seated on his haunches, was stirring, in a jar of boiling water, the perfumed powder of Moka.

It will be as well to tell you that I had cured Sidi Houmaïum of a malignant skin-eruption, against which the physicians and surgeons of the country had unavailingly employed all their panaceas and amulets. The good fellow was truly grateful to me.

Round the botéga was placed a bench, covered with small grass mats, and on this bench were squatted five or six Moors, the red fez, with a tassel of blue silk, on their heads, their legs crossed, their eyelids half closed, the chibouk in their lips, enjoying in silence the aroma of Turkish tobacco and of the Arabian berry.

I know not by what sudden inspiration the idea of

consulting Sidi Houmaïum flashed upon my mind. It was one of those strange impulses that are not to be defined, the cause of which no one can understand.

With solemn pace I entered the botéga, to the bewilderment of the persons present, and sat down on the bench.

The kaouadji, without in the least appearing to recognise me, brought me a chibouk and a cup of boiling coffee.

I sipped the beverage, I inhaled the chibouk; time passed slowly, and, towards six o'clock, the sanctified voice of the muezzin called the faithful to prayer. All rose, passed a hand over their beards, and took their way to the mosque.

At length I was alone.

Sidi Houmaïum, casting around him an uneasy glance, approached me and stooped to kiss my hand.

"Seigneur Talbe,* what brings you to my humble dwelling? In what can I serve you?"

"You can make me acquainted with Fatima."

"Fatima, the Mauresque?"

"Yes, the Mauresque."

"Seigneur Talbe, in the name of your mother, do not see this woman!"

"Why?"

"She is the perdition of faithful and infidels alike; she possesses a charm that kills! Do not see her!"

"Sidi Houmaïum, my resolution is not to be shaken. Fatima possesses a charm; well, I possess one still more powerful. Hers gives death; mine, life, youth, beauty. Tell her that, Sidi Houmaïum; tell her that the wrinkles of age fly at my approach. Tell her that of

* Talbe—*Doctor.*

the apple of Héva—the apple which, from the beginning of the centuries, has condemned us all to die—I have recovered the seeds, and planted them; that from these has sprung a tree, the savoury fruit of which gives the grace of eternal youth! that whoever tastes of it, though she were old, ugly, and shrivelled as a witch, would be restored, her wrinkles effaced, her skin made white and soft as a lily, her lips rosy and perfumed as the queen of flowers, her teeth lustrous as those of the young jackal."

"But, Seigneur Talbe," cried the Mussulman, "Fatima is not old; on the contrary, she is young and beautiful—so beautiful that she might be the pride of a sultan."

"I know it; she is not old, but she will become so. I want to see her. Remember, Sidi Houmaïum, your oft-repeated promises."

"Since such is your will, Seigneur Talbe, return to-morrow at the same hour. But remember well what I have told you: Fatima makes a vile use of her beauty."

"Be under no apprehension; I will not forget."

And presenting my hand to the coulouglis, I retired as I had come, with head held high and majestic step.

You may imagine with what impatience I awaited the hour of my rendezvous with Sidi Houmaïum. I lost all control of myself; a hundred times I crossed and recrossed the courtyard waiting to catch the sound of the muezzin, doffing my hat to everybody I met, and even talking with the sentinel, to kill time.

At length the verse from the Koran sounded in the air, passing from minaret to minaret over the lazy city. I flew to Sidi Houmaïum's botéga, which I found him closing up.

"Well?" I inquired breathlessly.

"Fatima awaits you, Seigneur Talbe."

He fastened the bolt, and then, without further explanation, walked on before me.

The sky was dazzlingly bright. The high white houses —a veritable procession of phantoms—draped at long distances apart by a ray of sunlight, reflected their dreariness on the infrequent passers.

Sidi Houmaïum proceeded onwards without turning his head, the long sleeves of his bernous almost sweeping the ground; and, as I followed his steps, I could hear him repeating in Arabic litanies like those in use by our pilgrims.

After awhile, turning out of the main street, he entered the Suma alley, in which two persons cannot walk abreast. There, in the black mire of the gutter, under wretched stalls, swarmed a whole population of shoemakers, morocco-leather embroiderers, dealers in Indian spices, aloes, dates, and rare perfumes, some going and coming with apathetic air, others squatted cross-legged, meditating, Heaven knows on what, in the midst of a bluish smoke that escaped from their mouths and nostrils at once.

The sun of Africa penetrated this dingy pigsty of a place in streaks of gold, shining here upon an old hook-nosed grey-beard, with chibouk and fat hands laden with rings; at another place, on the graceful profile of a handsome Jewess, sad and dreamy, in the interior of her shop; or, still more, on the display of an armourer, with its tapering yatagans and long Bedouin guns inlaid with pearl. The odour of filth mingled itself with the pungent emanations of drugs. Light cut sharply through the shadows of the place, shaping them into

luminous fringes, sprinkling them with glittering spangles, but without being able to drive them altogether away.

We proceeded still on our road.

Suddenly, in one of the inextricable windings of the alley, Sida Houmaïum stopped before a low door and raised the knocker.

"You must go in with me and act as interpreter for me," I said to him in an under-tone.

"Fatima speaks French," he replied, without turning his head.

At the same moment, the shining face of a negress appeared at the grating. Sidi Houmaïum spoke a few words to her in Arabic. The door was opened and suddenly closed behind me. The negress went away by a side-door which I had not at first noticed, and Sidi Houmaïum remained outside of the house.

Left alone for several minutes, I was beginning to lose patience, when a door on the left opened, and the negress who had let me in made a sign to me to follow her.

After ascending a few steps, I found myself in an open court paved with tiles in mosaic. Several doors opened into this court.

The negress conducted me into a room on the ground-floor, the open windows hung with silk curtains of Moorish design. All round the room violet-hued cushions were arranged. The floor was covered with an amber-coloured reed-mat, and the ceiling was painted with fantastic fruits and flowers in interminable arabesques. But what immediately seized on my attention was Fatima herself, reclining on the divan, her eyes veiled by long lids and black lashes, her lip

slightly shadowed, her nose straight and thin, her arms laden with heavy bracelets. She had pretty feet, and was saucily playing with her small gold-broidered slippers when I paused at the threshold.

For a few seconds the Mauresque observed me with a sidelong glance, and then a sly smile half parted her lips.

"Come in, Seigneur Talbe," she said in a nonchalant tone; "Sidi Houmaïum has prepared me for your visit; I know the motive which brings you. You are very good to interest yourself in poor Fatima, who is growing old, for she is already nearly seventeen—seventeen!—age of regrets and wrinkles, and tardy repentances! Ah! Seigneur Talbe, sit down and be welcome. You bring me the apple of Héva, that is true, is it not?—the apple that gives youth and beauty! And poor Fatima has need of it!"

I did not know what to answer—I was confused; but suddenly recollecting the motive which had brought me, the flow of my blood seemed to be arrested, turned, and, under the influence of this extreme reaction, I became cold as marble.

"You jest charmingly," I replied, taking a seat on the divan; "I had heard your wit celebrated as not less than your beauty—I now see how truly."

"Indeed!" she cried, "by whom?"

"By Dutertre."

"Dutertre?"

"Yes, Raymond Dutertre, the young officer who recently fell into the gulf of the Rummel—whom you loved, Fatima."

She opened her eyes wide with surprise.

"Who told you I loved him?" she demanded

with a strange look; "it is false! Did *he* tell you that?"

"No, but I know it; this letter proves it to me—this letter which you wrote to him, and which was the cause of his death; for it was in flying to meet you that he risked his life at night on the rocks of the Kasba."

I had scarcely finished speaking, when Fatima rose abruptly, a dark fire glittering in her eyes.

"I was sure of it!" she cried. "Yes, when the negress came to tell me of the misfortune, I said to her, 'Aïssa, this is *his* doing—*his!*' Oh, the wretch!"

While I was watching her, completely stupefied by the strangeness of her exclamations, she approached me and said in a low tone—

"Will he die—will he die soon? I should like to see him cut in pieces!"

She had seized me by the arm and looked through and through me. I shall never forget the dull pallor of her face—her large black glaring eyes, her trembling lips.

"Of whom are you speaking, Fatima?" I said. "Explain yourself—I do not understand you."

"Of whom? Of Castagnac! You are *talbe* of the hospital; well, give him poison! He is a scoundrel! He compelled me to write to the officer to come here—me—against my will, though I knew that this young man had long sought to gain admittance here; but I knew that Castagnac meant him harm. When I refused, he threatened to come from the hospital to beat me if I did not write at once. Stay! here is his letter. I tell you, he is a scoundrel!"

I shrink from repeating all that the Mauresque told me concerning Castagnac. She related to me the

history of their liaison; after having seduced he had corrupted her, and, for two years, the wretch had traded upon the poor girl's dishonour; and, not content with that, had beaten her!

I left Fatima's house with a heavy heart.

Sidi Houmaïum was waiting for me at the door; we redescended the Suma alley.

"Be on your guard," said the coulouglis, watching me out of the corner of his eye; "be on your guard, Seigneur Talbe—you are very pale; the bad angel hovers above your head!"

I shook the good fellow by the hand, and replied—

"Fear nothing!"

My resolution was taken: without losing a minute I mounted to the Kasba, entered the hospital, and knocked at Castagnac's door.

"Come in!"

The expression of my face appeared to announce nothing agreeable, for as soon as he perceived me, he rose with a startled look.

"Oh! it's you," he cried with a forced smile; "I was not expecting a visit from you."

My only answer was to show him the letter he had written to Fatima.

He turned pale, and, after looking at the letter for a few seconds, would have sprung upon me; but I stopped him with a gesture.

"If you move another step," I said, laying my hand upon the hilt of my sword, "I'll kill you like a dog! You are a scoundrel, and you have murdered Dutertre! I was in the dissecting-room, and overheard all. Do not deny it! Your conduct towards this woman is odious. A French officer descend to such a degree of

infamy! Listen: I might deliver you up to justice; but your dishonour would fall upon all of us. If you are not utterly lost to shame, kill yourself! I will give you till to-morrow. To-morrow morning at seven o'clock, if I find you living, I will myself deliver you up to the commandant."

Having said so much, I retired without waiting for his answer, and hastened to give orders to the sentinel not to permit Lieutenant Castagnac to quit the hospital on any pretext; I gave special instructions also to the gate-keeper, and held him responsible for anything that might occur in consequence of neglect or weakness on his part. I then tranquilly returned to my lodging, as if nothing particular had taken place. I was even gayer than usual, and sat over my dinner till nearly eight o'clock.

From the moment Castagnac's crime was proved to me I felt pitiless: Raymond cried to me for vengeance.

After dinner I went to the shop of a rosin-seller and bought a torch, such as our spahis carry in their night-sports; then, returning to the hospital, I went down to the dissecting-room, taking care to double-lock the door after me.

The voice of the muezzin announced the tenth hour; the mosques were deserted, the night profoundly dark.

I seated myself in front of the open window, inhaling the mild breath of the breeze, and giving myself up to the reveries that had formerly been so dear to me. How much of suffering and anxiety I had gone through during the past fortnight! In my whole previous existence I had not experienced anything to equal it. I now felt as if I had escaped from the claws of the

spirit of darkness, and were enjoying my regained liberty.

In this manner time sped; already the guard had twice been its round and relieved the sentinels, when, suddenly, I heard rapid but stealthy steps on the stairs. A short sharp knock was given at the door.

I returned no answer.

An uncertain hand groped for the key.

"It is Castagnac!" I said to myself, my heart beating rapidly.

Two seconds passed, then some one without cried—

"Open the door!"

I was not deceived; it was he.

He listened, then placed his shoulder against the heavy oak door and endeavoured to force it open.

Once more all was silent. He listened again. I remained motionless—held my breath. Presently something was thrown down on the stairs; and then I heard the sound of retreating steps.

I had escaped death! But what next was he going to attempt?

In fear of a new and more violent endeavour to burst open the door, I hastened to shoot the two heavy iron bolts which made the amphitheatre a veritable prison.

This was a useless precaution, however, for, on returning to my seat at the window, I saw the shadow of Castagnac passing along the rampart above. The moon, which had risen on the side of the city, projected the shadow of the hospital on to the opposite precipice. A few stars glittered on the horizon; not a breath moved the still air.

Before venturing upon the dangerous path, the old

campaigner halted and looked at my window. He hesitated for a long while.

At the end of a quarter of an hour he took the first step, moving with his back flattened against the wall. He had reached half-way, and no doubt flattered himself that he should gain the ledge which descended to the Kasba, when I uttered the death-cry—

"Raymond! where are you going?"

But, whether it was that he was prepared for whatever might happen, or that he had more sang-froid than his victim, the scoundrel was unscared, and answered with an outburst of ironical laughter—

"A-ha! You are there, are you, doctor? I thought so. Wait till I return; we have a little account to settle together."

I lit my torch and held it out above the precipice.

"It is too late!" I cried. "Wretch! behold your grave!"

And the immense ranges of the abyss, with their black slippery rocks, bristling with wild fig-trees, were illuminated to the bottom of the valley.

The view was Titanic: the white light of the flaming pitch, descending from stage to stage of the rocks, casting their broad shadows into space, seemed to plough into unfathomable depths of darkness.

I was strongly affected myself, and fell back a step, as if seized with giddiness.

But he—separated from the yawning gulf but by the width of a brick—with what terror must he not have been overwhelmed!

His knees bent under him—his hands clutched at the wall. I held forth the blazing torch again: an enormous bat, disturbed by the light, commenced his dreary

round about the gigantic walls, like a black rat with angular wings, floating in the flame; and far, far down, the waves of the Rummel sparkled in immensity.

"Mercy!" cried the murderer in a broken voice—"mer-cy!"

I had not courage to prolong his torture, and threw my torch into the abyss.

It fell slowly, its ragged flame waving in the darkness; lighting, turn by turn, the ledges of the mighty rocks as it passed them, and sprinkling the bushes with its dazzling sparks.

While it was yet but a spot in the midst of night, and was still descending, a shadow overtook and passed it like a thunderbolt!

Justice, I knew, had been done!

On my way up the stairs from the amphitheatre, something bent under my foot: I stooped and picked it up; it was my own sword! With his habitual perfidy, Castagnac had resolved to kill me with my own weapon, so that my death might have appeared to be the result of suicide.

Moreover, as I had foreseen, the door of my room had been forced open, my bed turned over, my papers scattered about; his search, in fact, had been exhaustive.

This circumstance completely dissipated the involuntary feeling of pity with which the wretch's terrific end had inspired me.

# THE CHILD-STEALER.

## I.

In 1815, there was daily to be seen, wandering in the Hesse-Darmstadt quarter of Mayence, a tall emaciated woman, with hollow cheeks and haggard eyes; a frightful picture of madness. This unfortunate woman, named Christine Evig, a mattress-maker, living in the narrow street called Petit Volet, at the back of the cathedral, had lost her reason through the occurrence of a terrible event.

Passing one evening along the winding street of the Trois Bateaux, leading her little daughter by the hand, and suddenly observing that she had for a moment let go of the child, and no longer heard the sound of its steps, the poor woman turned and called—

"Deubche! Deubche! where are you?"

Nobody answered, and the street, as far she could see, was deserted.

Then running, crying, calling, she returned to the port, and peered into the dark water lying beneath the vessels.

Her cries and moans drew the neighbours about her; the poor mother explained to them her agonies. They joined her in making fresh search, but nothing, not a

trace, not an indication, was discovered to throw light on this frightful mystery.

From that time Christine Evig had never again set foot in her home; night and day she wandered through the town, crying in a voice growing feebler and more plaintive—

"Deubche! Deubche!"

She was pitied. Sometimes one, sometimes another kind person gave her food and cast-off clothes. And the police, in presence of a sympathy so general, did not think it their duty to interfere and shut Christine up in a madhouse, as was usual at that period.

She was left therefore to go about as she liked, without any one troubling himself concerning her ways.

But what gave to the misfortune of Christine a truly sinister character was that the disappearance of her little daughter had been, as it were, the signal for several events of the same kind; a dozen children disappeared in an astonishing and inexplicable manner, several of them belonging to the upper rank of townspeople.

These events usually occurred at nightfall, when the street-passengers were few, and every one of them was hastening home from business. A wilful child went out to the doorstep of its parent's house, its mother calling after it, "Karl!" "Ludwig!" "Lotelé!"—absolutely like poor Christine. No answer! They rushed in every direction; the whole neighbourhood was ransacked; all was over!

To describe to you the inquiries of the police, the arrests that were made, the perquisitions, the terror of families, would be a thing impossible.

To see one's child die is, doubtless, frightful; but to

lose it without knowing what has become of it, to think that we shall never look upon it again, that the poor little being, so feeble and tender, which we have pressed to our heart with so much love, is ill perhaps—it may be calling for us, and we unable to help it—this passes all imagination—exceeds the power of human expression to convey.

Now one evening in the October of that year, 1817, Christine Evig, after having strayed about the streets, had seated herself on the trough of the Bishop's Fountain, her long grey hair hanging about her face, and her eyes wandering dreamily into vacancy.

The servant-girls of the neighbourhood, instead of stopping to chat as usual at the fountain, made haste to fill their pitchers and regain their masters' houses.

The poor mad woman stayed there alone, motionless, under the icy shower in which the Rhine mist was falling. The high houses around, with their sharp gables, their latticed windows, their innumerable dormer-lights, were slowly becoming enveloped in darkness.

The Bishop's Chapel clock struck seven, still Christine did not move, but sat shivering and murmuring—

"Deubche! Deubche!"

At that moment, while the pale hue of twilight yet lingered on the points of the roofs before finally disappearing, she suddenly shuddered from head to foot, stretched forward her neck, and her face, impassible for nearly two years, was lit with such an expression of intelligence, that Counsellor Trumf's servant, who was at the moment holding her pitcher to the spout, turned in astonishment at seeing this gesture of the mad woman's.

At the same moment, a woman, with head bent down,

passed along the pavement at the other side of the square, holding in her arms something that was struggling with her, enveloped in a piece of linen cloth.

Seen through the rain this woman was of striking aspect; she was hurrying away like a thief who has succeeded in effecting a robbery, slinking along in the shadow, her rags dragging behind her.

Christine Evig had extended her shrunken left hand, and a few inarticulate words fell from her lips; but suddenly a piercing cry escaped from her bosom—

"It is she!"

And bounding across the square, in less than a minute she reached the corner of the Rue des Vieilles Ferrailles, where the woman had passed out of her sight.

But there Christine stopped, breathless; the stranger was lost in the darkness of that filthy place, and nothing was to be heard but the monotonous sound of the water falling from the house-gutters.

What had passed through the mad woman's mind? What had she remembered? Had she had some vision—one of these insights of the soul that for a moment unshroud to us the dark depths of the past? I do not know.

By whatever means, she had recovered her reason.

Without losing a moment in pursuing the vanished apparition, the unfortunate woman hurried up the Rue des Trois Bateaux as if carried along by vertigo, and turning at the corner of the Place Gutenberg, rushed into the hall of the provost, Kasper Schwartz, crying in a hoarse voice—

"Monsieur le Prévôt, the child-stealers are discovered! Quick! listen! listen!"

The provost was just finishing his evening meal. He was a grave, methodical man, liking to take his ease after supper. Thus the sight of this phantom greatly disturbed him, and setting down the cup of tea he was in the act of raising to his lips, he cried—

"Good God! am I not to have a single moment's quiet during the day? Can there possibly be a more unfortunate man than I am? What does this mad woman want with me now? Why was she allowed to come in?"

Recovering her calmness at these words, Christine replied in a suppliant manner—

"Ah, monsieur! you ask if there is a being more unfortunate than yourself; look at me — look at me!"

Her voice was broken with tears; her clenched hands put aside the long grey hair from her pale face. She was terrible to see.

"Mad! yes, my God! I have been mad; the Lord, in His mercy, hid from me my misfortune; but I am mad no longer. Oh, what I have seen! That woman was carrying off a child—for it was a child; I am sure of it."

"Go to the devil, with your woman and child!—go to the devil!" cried the provost. Seeing the unfortunate woman throw herself upon her knees, "Hans! Hans!" he cried, "will you come and turn this woman out of doors? To the devil with the office of provost! It brings me nothing but annoyance."

The servant appeared, and Monsieur Kasper Schwartz pointed to Christine—

"Show her out," he said. "To-morrow I shall certainly draw out a warrant in due form, to rid the town

of this unfortunate creature. Thank Heaven we are not without madhouses!"

The mad woman laughed dreamily, while the servant, full of pity for her, took her by the arm, and said gently to her—

"Come, Christine—come."

She had relapsed into madness, and murmured—

"Deubche!—Deubche!"

## II.

While these things were passing in the house of the provost, Kasper Schwartz, a carriage came down the Rue de l'Arsenal; the sentinel on guard before the shot-park, recognising the equipage as that of Count Diderich, colonel of the Imperial regiment of Hilbourighausen, carried arms; a salute answered him from the interior of the vehicle.

The carriage, drawn at full speed, seemed as if going towards the Porte d'Allemagne, but it took the Rue de l'Homme de Fer, and stopped before the door of the provost's house.

As the colonel, in full uniform, got out, he raised his eyes, and appeared stupefied, for the shocking laughter of the mad woman made itself heard outside the house.

Count Diderich was a man about five-and-thirty or forty years of age, tall, with brown beard and hair, and a severe and energetic physiognomy.

He entered the provost's hall abruptly, saw Hans leading Christine, and, without waiting to have himself announced, walked into Monsieur Schwartz's dining-room, exclaiming—

"Monsieur, the police of your district is intolerable! Twenty minutes ago I stopped in front of the cathedral, at the moment of the Angelus. As I got out of my carriage, seeing the Countess Hilbourighausen coming down the steps of the cathedral, I moved on one side to allow her to pass, and I then found that my son—a child of three years old, who had been seated by my side—had disappeared. The carriage door on the side towards the bishop's house was open: advantage had been taken of the moment when I was letting down the carriage steps to carry off the child! All the search and inquiries of my people have been fruitless. I am in despair, monsieur!—in despair!"

The colonel's agitation was extreme; his dark eyes flashed like lightning through the tears he tried to repress; his hand clasped the hilt of his sword.

The provost appeared dumbfounded; his apathetic nature was distressed at the idea of having to exert himself and pass the night in giving orders, and going about from place to place—in short, to recommence, for the hundreth time, the hitherto fruitless search.

He would rather have put off the business till the next day.

"Monsieur," replied the colonel, "understand that I will not be trifled with. You shall answer for my son with your head. It is your place to watch over the public security—you fail in your duty—it is scandalous! Oh that I at least knew who has struck the blow!"

While pronouncing these incoherent words, he paced up and down the room, with clenched teeth and sombre looks.

Perspiration stood on the purple brow of Master

Schwartz, who murmured, as he looked at the plate before him—

"I'm very sorry, monsieur—very sorry; but this is the tenth!—the thieves are much more clever than my detectives. What would you have me do?"

At this imprudent response the colonel bounded with rage, and seizing the fat provost by the shoulders, dragged him out of his arm-chair.

"What would I have you do?—Is that the answer you give to a father who comes to demand of you his child?"

"Let me go, monsieur!—let me go!" roared the provost, choking with alarm. "In Heaven's name calm yourself! A woman—a mad woman—Christine Evig, has just been here—she told me—yes, I remember—Hans! Hans!"

The servant, who had overheard all at the keyhole, entered the room instantly.

"Monsieur?"

"Fetch back the mad woman."

"She's still outside, monsieur."

"Well, bring her in. Pray sit down, colonel."

Count Diderich remained standing in the middle of the room, and a moment afterwards Christine Evig returned, haggard, and laughing insanely, as she had gone out.

Hans and a servant-girl, curious as to what was passing, stood in the open doorway open-mouthed. The colonel, with an imperious gesture, made a sign to them to go away, then, crossing his arms and confronting Master Schwartz, he cried—

"Well, monsieur, what kind of intelligence do you expect to obtain from this unfortunate creature?"

The provost moved, as if he were going to speak; his fat cheeks shook.

The mad woman uttered a sort of sobbing laughter.

"Monsieur," said the provost, at length, "this woman's case is the same as your own; two years ago she lost her child, and that drove her mad."

The colonel's eyes overflowed with tears.

"Go on," he said.

"When she came here a little while ago she appeared to have recovered a spark of reason, and told me——"

Master Schwartz paused.

"What did she tell you, monsieur?"

"That she had seen a woman carrying a child."

"Ah!"

"Thinking that she was only raving, I sent her away."

The colonel smiled bitterly.

"You sent her away?" he cried.

"Yes; she seemed to me to have relapsed into her state of madness."

"Parbleu!" cried the count, in a tone of thunder, "you refuse assistance to this unfortunate woman? You drive away from her her last gleam of hope, instead of sustaining and defending her, as it is your duty to do? And you dare to retain your office!—you dare to receive its emoluments!"

He walked up close to the provost, whose wig trembled, and added, in a low concentrated tone—

"You are a scoundrel! If I do not recover my child, I'll kill you like a dog."

Master Schwartz, his staring eyes nearly starting from his head, his hands helplessly open, his mouth clammy, said not a word; terror held him by the throat; and besides, he knew not what to answer.

Suddenly the colonel turned his back on him, and going to Christine, looked at her for a few seconds, then, raising his voice—

"My good woman," he said, "try and answer me. In the name of God—in the name of your child—where did you see that woman?"

He paused, and the poor woman murmured in a plaintive voice—

"Deubche!—Deubche!—they have killed her!"

The count turned pale, and, carried away by terror, seized the mad woman's hand.

"Answer me, unfortunate creature!—answer me!" he cried.

He shook her; Christine's head fell back; she uttered a peal of frightful laughter, and said—

"Yes—yes—it is done!—the wicked woman has killed it!"

The count felt his knees giving way, and sank rather than sat down upon a chair, his elbows upon the table, his pale face between his hands, his eyes fixed, as if gazing upon some fearful scene.

The minutes passed slowly in silence.

The clock struck ten; the sound made the colonel start. He rose, opened the door, and Christine went out.

"Monsieur," said Master Schwartz.

"Hold your tongue!" interrupted the colonel, with a withering look.

And he followed the mad woman down the dark street.

A singular idea had come into his mind.

"All is lost," he said to himself; "this unhappy woman cannot reason, cannot comprehend questions

put to her; but she has seen something—her instinct may lead her."

It is almost needless to add that the provost was amazed. The worthy magistrate lost not a moment in double-locking his door; that done, he was carried away by a noble indignation.

"A man like me threatened!—seized by the collar! Aha, colonel! we'll see whether there are any laws in this country! To-morrow morning I shall address a complaint to the Grand Duke, and expose to him the conduct of his officers," &c.

## III.

Meanwhile the colonel followed the mad woman, and by a strange effect of the superexcitation of his senses, saw her in the darkness, through the mist, as plainly as in broad daylight; he heard her sighs, her confused words, in spite of the continual moan of the autumn winds rushing through the deserted streets.

A few late townspeople, the collars of their coats raised to the level of their ears, their hands in their pockets, and their hats pressed down over their eyes, passed, at infrequent intervals, along the pavements; doors were heard to shut with a crash, an ill-fastened shutter banged against a wall, a tile torn from a house-top by the wind fell into the street; then, again, the immense torrent of air whirled on its course, drowning with its lugubrious voice all other sounds of the night.

It was one of those cold nights at the end of October, when the weathercocks, shaken by the north wind, turn

giddily on the high roofs, and cry with shrilly voices, "Winter!—Winter!—Winter is come!"

On reaching the wooden bridge Christine leaned over the pier and looked down into the dark muddy water that dragged itself along in the canal; then, rising with an uncertain air, she went on her way, shivering and murmuring—

"Oh! oh!—it is cold!"

The colonel, clutching the folds of his cloak with one hand, pressed the other against his heart, which felt almost ready to burst.

Eleven o'clock was struck by the church of St. Ignatius, then midnight.

Christine Evig still went on; she had passed through the narrow streets of l'Imprimerie, of the Maillet, of the Halle aux Vins, of the Vieilles Boucheries, and of the Fosses de l'Evêché.

A hundred times, in despair, the count had said to himself that this nocturnal pursuit would lead to nothing; but, remembering that it was his last resource, he followed her as she went from place to place, stopping, now by a corner-stone, now in the recess of a wall, then continuing her uncertain course—absolutely like a homeless brute wandering at hazard in the darkness.

At length, towards one o'clock in the morning, Christine came once more into the Place de l'Evêché. The weather appeared to have somewhat cleared up; the rain no longer fell, a fresh wind swept the streets, and the moon, now and then surrounded by dark clouds, now and then shining in full brilliancy, shed its rays, smooth and cold as blades of steel, upon the thousand pools of water lying in the hollows of the paving-stones.

The mad woman tranquilly seated herself on the edge of the fountain, in the place she had occupied some hours before. For a long time she remained in the same attitude, with dull eyes, and her rags clinging to her withered form.

All the count's hopes had vanished.

But, at one of those moments when the moon, breaking through the clouds, threw its pale light upon the silent edifices, she rose suddenly, stretched forward her neck, and the colonel, following the direction of her gaze, observed that it was fixed on the narrow lane of the Vieilles Ferrailles, about two hundred paces distant from the fountain.

At the same moment she darted forward like an arrow.

The count followed instantly upon her steps, plunging into the block of tall old buildings that overlook the church of St. Ignatius.

The mad woman seemed to have wings ; ten times he was on the point of losing her, so rapid was her pace through these winding lanes, encumbered with carts, dung-heaps, and faggots piled before the doors on the approach of winter.

Suddenly she disappeared into a sort of blind alley, pitch dark, and the colonel was obliged to stop, not knowing how to proceed further.

Fortunately, after a few seconds, the sickly yellow rays of a lamp pierced the darkness of the depths of this filthy hole, through a small cracked window-pane ; this light was stationary, but now and then it was momentarily obscured by some intervening figure.

Some one was evidently awake in that foul den.

What was being done ?

Without hesitation the colonel went straight towards the light.

In the midst of the obstructions he found the mad woman, standing in the mire, her eyes staring, her mouth open, looking at the solitary glimmer.

The appearance of the count did not seem at all to surprise her; only, pointing to the window on the first floor in which the light was seen, she said, "It's there!" in an accent so impressive that the count started.

Under the influence of this impulsion he sprang towards the door of the house, and with one pressure of his shoulder burst it open. Impenetrable darkness filled the place.

The mad woman was close behind him.

"Hush!" she cried.

And, once more giving way to the unfortunate woman's instinct, the count remained motionless and listened.

The profoundest silence reigned in the house; it might have been supposed that everybody in it was either sleeping or dead.

The clock of St. Ignatius struck two.

A faint whispering was then heard on the first floor, then a vague light appeared on a crumbling wall at the back; boards creaked above the colonel, and the light came nearer and nearer, falling first upon a ladder-staircase, a heap of old iron in a corner, a pile of wood; further on, upon a sash-window looking out into a yard, bottles right and left, a basket of rags—a dark, ruinous, and hideous interior.

At last a tin lamp with a smoky wick, held by a small hand, as dry and sinewy as the claw of a bird of prey, was slowly projected over the stair-rail, and above the

light appeared the head of an anxious-looking woman, with hair the colour of tow, bony cheeks, tall ears standing almost straight out from the head, light grey eyes glittering under deep brows—in short, a sinister being, dressed in a filthy petticoat, her feet in old shoes, her fleshless arms bare to the elbows, holding a lamp in one hand and in the other a sharp slater's hatchet.

Scarcely had this abominable being glared into the darkness than she rushed back up the stairs with astonishing agility.

But it was too late: the colonel had bounded after her, sword in hand, and seized the old witch by the petticoat.

"My child, wretch!" he cried; "my child!"

At this roar of the lion the hyæna turned and struck at random with her hatchet.

A frightful struggle ensued; the woman, thrown down upon the stairs, tried to bite; the lamp, which had fallen on the ground, burned there, its wick sputtering in the damp and throwing changing shadows on the dusky wall.

"My child!" repeated the colonel; "my child, or I'll kill you!"

"You—yes, you shall have your child," replied the breathless woman in an ironical tone. "Oh! it's not finished—not—I've good teeth—the coward, to—to strangle me! Ho!—above, there!—are you deaf?—let me go—I'll—I'll tell you all."

She was nearly exhausted, when another witch, older and more haggard, tottered down the stairs, crying—

"I'm here!"

The wretch was armed with a large butcher's knife,

and the count, looking up, saw that she was selecting a place in which to strike him between the shoulders.

He felt himself lost; a providential accident alone could save him.

The mad woman, until then a motionless spectator, sprang upon the old woman, crying—

"It is she!—there she is! Oh, I know her!—she shall not escape me!"

The only answer was a gush of blood, which inundated the landing-place; the old woman had cut the unfortunate Christine's throat.

It was the work of a second.

The colonel had time to spring to his feet and put himself on his guard; seeing which the two frightful old women fled rapidly up the stairs and disappeared in the darkness.

The flame of the smoky lamp flickered in the oil, and the count took advantage of its last rays to follow the murderers. But on reaching the top of the stairs, prudence counselled him not to abandon this point of egress.

He heard Christine breathing below, and drops of blood fell from stair to stair in the midst of the silence. It was horrible!

On the other hand, a sound at the back of the den made the count fear that the two women were attempting to escape by the windows.

Ignorance of the place for a moment prevented his moving from the spot on which he was standing, when a ray of light shining through a glass door allowed him to see the two windows of a room looking into the alley lit by a light from without. At the same time he heard, in the alley, a loud voice call out—

"Hallo!—what's going on here? A door open!"

"Come this way!—come this way!" cried the colonel.

At the same moment the light gleamed inside of the house.

"Ah!" cried the voice, "blood! The devil!—I can't be mistaken—it's Christine!"

"Come here!" repeated the colonel.

A heavy step sounded on the stairs, and the hairy face of the watchman, Sélig, with his big otter-skin cap, and his goat-skin over his shoulders, appeared at the head of the stairs, directing the light of his lantern towards the count.

The sight of the uniform astonished the worthy fellow.

"Who's there?" he inquired.

"Come up, my good fellow, come up!"

"Pardon, colonel—but, down below, there's——"

"Yes—a woman has been killed; her murderers are in this house."

The watchman ascended the few remaining stairs, and, holding up his lantern, threw a light on the place; it was a landing about six feet square, on to which opened the door of the room in which the two women had taken refuge. A ladder on the left hand, leading up to the garret-story, still further contracted the space.

The count's paleness astonished Sélig. However, he dared not question the colonel, who asked—

"Who lives here?"

"Two women—a mother and daughter; they are called about the market the Jösels. The mother sells butcher's meat in the market, the daughter makes sausage meat."

The count, recalling the words uttered by Christine in her delirium—"Poor child!—they have killed it!"—was seized with giddiness, and a cold perspiration burst from his forehead.

By the most frightful chance he discovered, at the same instant, behind the stairs, a little frock of blue and red tartan, a pair of small shoes, and a black cap, thrown there out of the light. He shuddered, but an invincible power urged him on to look—to contemplate with his own eyes; he approached, therefore, trembling from head to foot, and with a faltering hand raised these articles of dress.

They had belonged to his child!

Some drops of blood stained his fingers.

Heaven knows what passed in the count's heart. For a long while, leaning for support against the wall, with fixed eyes, arms hanging helplessly by his side, and open mouth, he remained as if stunned. But suddenly he sprang against the door with a yell of fury that terrified the watchman. Nothing could have resisted such a shock. Within the room was heard the crashing of the furniture which the two women had piled up to barricade the entrance; the building shook to its foundation. The count disappeared into the obscurity; then came shrieks, wild cries, imprecations, hoarse clamours, from the midst of the darkness.

There was nothing human in it; it was as if wild beasts were tearing each other to pieces in the recesses of their den!

The alley filled with people. The neighbours from all sides rushed into the house, inquiring—

"What's the matter? Are they murdering one another here?"

Suddenly all became silent, and the count, covered with wounds from a knife, his uniform in tatters, came down the stairs, his sword red to the hilt; even his moustaches were blood-stained, and those who saw him must have thought that he had been fighting after the manner of tigers.

* * * * *

What more is there for me to tell you?

Colonel Diderich was cured of his wounds, and disappeared from Mayence.

The authorities of the town considered it judicious to keep these horrible details from the parents of the victims; I learned them from the watchman Sélig himself, after he had grown old, and had retired to his village near Saarbrück. He alone knew these details, having appeared as witness at the secret inquiry which was instituted before the criminal tribunal of Mayence.

# HANS SCHNAP'S SPY-GLASS.

At one time I knew, at Mayence, a worthy apothecary, named Hans Schnaps. The door of his shop opened on to the Thiermack, and was surmounted by a sign-board, the panels of which are ornamented with the caduceus of Mercury and the serpentaria of Esculapius. As to Hans Schnaps himself, instead of attending to his business, he strolled about the streets, carrying a big spy-glass under his arm, and leaving his drugs to the care of a couple of youths in his employ.

He was a singular personage, with a long nose, grey eyes, and mocking lips. From the look of his wide-brimmed felt hat, his great coat of reddish drugget, and his beard trimmed into a point, you might have taken him for a Flemish painter.

I sometimes met him at the tavern of the Pot de Tabac, on the Zeil, where we played together a game of youcker, or chatted about the weather. Schnaps never felt called on to give me any information on the subject of his occupations, and I saw no necessity for enlightening him on the subject of mine; it was, in fact, a matter of little or no importance to either.

One day, Burgomaster Zacharias said to me—

"Doctor Bénédum, you associate with a certain Hans Schnaps."

"Quite true, burgomaster; we meet pretty frequently."

"That Schnaps is a madman."

"I have never noticed it."

"Nothing is more positive; instead of attending to his business, he goes gadding about, with a spy-glass under his arm, stopping here and there; in short, losing his time and his customers."

"That is his affair, burgomaster; what would you have me do in it?"

"But he makes his wife unhappy," urged the burgomaster.

"What! is he married?"

"Yes, to the daughter of a cloth merchant, a very worthy and well-to-do man."

"So much the better; Schnaps will come in for some of his father-in-law's money."

"Yes; but he'll soon see the end of it."

"With his spy-glass?"

"No; but with his experiments. Imagine, doctor—he has established himself in his cellar, and what he does there the deuce only knows. If, by chance, you cast a glance through the grating, you find his spy-glass levelled at you; Schnaps eyes you with a roar of laughter—and when noon comes, his wife is always obliged to call out to him at least four times, 'Hans! Hans! the soup is ready!'"

"Poor woman, she is very much to be pitied!"

The burgomaster suspected that I was making fun of him, but he pretended not to see it, and proposed that we should share a pot of beer together. I accepted his invitation, and we talked of other matters.

These odd revelations, however, puzzled me not a little. What was Schnaps about in his cellar? What was the meaning of the spy-glass levelled at the grating? Was it a joke, or really some serious experiment? All this kept running in my head, and, a few days later, I went to the shop for the express purpose of finding out what I could. It was about nine o'clock. Madame Schnaps, a dry, nervous little woman, with dull eyes, features generally insignificant and ill put together, and cap set awry upon her head—one of those beings who, without speaking a word, contrive to suggest the idea that they are victims—Madame Schnaps received me behind the counter.

"Dear madame," I said to her, bowing graciously, with lifted hat—"dear madame, where can I find your husband, Monsieur Schnaps?"

"In the cellar," she answered, with a grim smile.

"Already!"

The excellent creature appeared charmed by my manner, and raising her eyes directed me to a door on the left.

I hastened along the passage, and succeeded, after a good deal of stumbling on the dark stairs, in reaching the stone-paved floor of the laboratory.

It was really a cellar, but high, wide, spacious, and perfectly dry; filled with gigantic telescopes, mirrors of all kinds—flat, spherical, parabolical—prisms, crystals, and lenses, mounted on tripod stands—in short, the whole apparatus of an optician.

Hans Schnaps turned in surprise on hearing me descending.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he cried, "it's you, Dr. Bénédum! Glad to see you."

He came towards me with open arms. But, stretching forth my hand with a tragic gesture—

"Halt! halt!" I cried; "stop a moment before we indulge in familiarities! I come on behalf of the burgomaster to feel your pulse!"

He gravely held out his arm to me; I placed my thumb on the artery, and, speaking in a thoughtful tone and with pouted lip, I said—

"Aha! you are not so ill as they say."

"Ill!" he cried.

"No; you are not yet wholly out of your wits."

These words sent him off into such fits of laughter that Madame Schnaps leaned over the stairs, and peered down into the cellar with wondering eyes.

"Sophia! Sophia!" cried the apothecary, "ha! ha! ha! Do you know what they say of me? Ha! ha! ha! They say I am out of my wits!"

His wife made a grimace, and hurried away without answering.

Becoming a little more calm, Hans Schnaps said to me—

"Take a seat, Dr. Bénédum, and tell me what has procured me the honour of this visit?"

He placed an arm-chair for me, and seated himself on the box of a daguerreotype apparatus, his long grasshopper legs sprawled wide apart, his elbows on his knees, and his pointed beard drawn out between his bony fingers.

His was truly a strange physiognomy, seen by the dim light admitted by the cellar-grating, and the vague gleams that faded into shadow amid the thousand optical instruments added to the singularity of the scene.

I simply related to him the conversation I had had with the burgomaster, and Schnaps, far from growing angry, burst into new peals of laughter.

"What a fool that burgomaster is," he cried, "for whom I have just invented a new kind of syringe—a superb discovery, doctor! And—ha! ha! Observe that spy-glass; it's the famous Schnaps' syringe, unique of its kind! With this wonderful instrument I am able to accomplish what has never before been possible—to syringe the brains of idiots, imbeciles, crétins, and burgomasters generally! I pour into the body of the pump a decoction of Voltaire, Shakspeare, or Father Malebranche; I delicately introduce into your eye the small end of the instrument—I press, and, crack!—you are filled with good sense, poetry, or metaphysics!"

Here Hans Schnaps made such contortions, threw himself about so violently, alternately plunging and drawing up his legs, that I expected to see him tumble off his box; but, fortunately, he preserved his equilibrium.

"Aha! my dear friend," I said, "an excellent joke."

"Joke!—not the least in the world. You are much too sensible, Doctor Bénédum, not to know that our opinions depend upon our point of view: a miserable beggar, without fire or shelter, covered with rags, and with only a dunghill to lie upon, sees things in a light very different from that in which a nabob looks on them; social order to him appears detestable, laws absurd."

"Doubtless, but——"

"But," interrupted Schnaps, "seat the fellow at a splendid table, in a beautiful house, surround him with odoriferous flowers and pretty women, dress him in magnificent dresses, feed him on the daintiest dishes, let him drink Johannisberg, and place behind his chair

a dozen lacqueys, who call him monseigneur, highness, most eminent, &c., he'll think that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds; social order will appear to him magnificent, and he will proclaim our laws masterpieces of human wisdom."

"Agreed, my dear Schnaps, agreed; what you now say is the history of humanity; we all look at things through the great or small end of the spy-glass, as it may happen. But what the deuce are you driving at?"

"Ah!" cried the apothecary, "it's very simple. From the moment that all depends on our point of viow, the question of happiness is reduced to always finding the point of view that is the most agreeable—and that is precisely the merit of my discovery. Judge for yourself."

He handed me his spy-glass; I applied it to my eye, and could not refrain from uttering a cry of admiration. I saw myself President of the Scientific Society of Berlin, plump, ruddy, and hearty, decorated with the Orders of Merit, of the Black Eagle, of the Brown Eagle, of the Red Eagle, of the Metidjé, of the Garter, and others besides. I held the bell, and called people to order. Through the windows of the amphitheatre I saw my two-horse calèche and my footman bedizened with lace. Further off, I saw my mistress, a première danseuse, captivated by my charms, walking under the lindens, a parasol in her hand—and I said to myself, "Bénédum! Bénédum!—fortunate being! sublime genius! great man!"

A burst of ironical laughter drew me from this profound contemplation. I put down the spy-glass and found myself in the cellar, opposite the apothecary, who was watching me, his little malicious eyes wrinkled up to his ears.

"Well, well," he said, "what do you think of that?"

"Oh, my dear Schnaps," I exclaimed, "let me have it!"

"A good joke!" he cried; "you forget that it cost me ten years' labour to make it. With this spy-glass the universe belongs to me, after a manner; I can see my wife, young, pretty, prepossessing; I am always gay, laughing, and contented. This spy-glass lifts me above the most powerful monarchs of the world; renders me richer than Crœsus, more omnipotent than Xerxes; I would not lose it for the world! That is not all: with this spy-glass I can give myself injected doses of good sense, poetry, or metaphysics, according to the requirements of my temperament."

"But, in the name of heaven, Schnaps," I replied, transported with enthusiasm, "how did you make this sublime discovery?"

"It is not so marvellous as you believe," he said, laughing; "it is nothing more nor less than a kaleidoscope, but a kaleidoscope of a new kind: instead of allowing flowers and bits of glass to fall at hazard, it draws them together in a natural order. In other terms, it is a combination of the telescope and the daguerreotype, two instruments which Nature herself has united in our heads."

At this moment he took out of his pocket a small snuff-box, and slowly inhaled a pinch, as if to collect himself, and then continued—

"Three years ago I was trying to fix the solar spectrum on a copper-plate. To this end I employed chloride of silver, bitumen of Judea plunged in oil of lavender and petroleum, iodide of silver, bromide of lime, solid and fluid—in short, all imaginable chemical combinations, without obtaining any decisive result.

One evening, under the influence of a more sensitive composition, red, orange, and violet light appeared to fix itself; the plate took, vaguely, the tints of the iris. I was forming the best opinion of it, when my dear spouse, according to her immemorial custom, cried out, 'Hans! the soup is getting cold! Hans! the soup is getting cold! Hans! Hans! Hans! Hans! the soup is getting cold! The soup is getting cold!' These cries rasped my nerves. Whether I would or not, I was obliged to interrupt my experiment. I placed the copper-plate on the jut of the wall you see over there, and which served me to stand a candle on; that done, I went upstairs and quietly seated myself at table."

"And what did you say to your wife?"

"Nothing."

"In your place, I should have wrung her neck."

The apothecary smiled slily.

"That same night," he replied, "after supper, I went down again into the laboratory. Fatigue and weariness of mind forbade my continuing my labour; I sat down in that arm-chair and fell asleep. On awaking, at one o'clock in the morning, I saw that the candle had gone out; but the rays of a star broke through the grating, and reflected themselves on the metallic plate at the far end of the cellar. While my attention was fixed on this luminous spot, I was thinking of my wife; I felt impelled to correct her; a thousand little home discomforts passed through my head; but at length, tired of these reflections, I fell off to sleep again. The next day all was forgotten, till, happening to cast my eyes on the plate, I saw there—what?—my dream of the past night imprinted on it with striking truthfulness: my wife, the dining-room, the clock on the chimney, the windows at back, the little yard beyond—my household interior

to the smallest details. Only fancy entered into the scene to a certain extent: I was administering sound correction to Madame Schnaps!

"Imagine my enthusiasm. I speedily conceived my spy-glass. I comprehended that the brain of man is like the eye of the fly, an optical instrument with a thousand facets; that whatever is reflected in it may come from it by refraction, and imprint itself upon a chemical substance, the secret of which I had discovered.

"Thus, dear doctor, all your passions, all your desires, all your thoughts, form themselves in this spy-glass. You improvise better by a look than by speech, you materialise instantaneously the intellectual world moving within your mind."

This discovery appeared to me miraculous.

"Master Schnaps—extraordinary man!" I cried, "suffer me to embrace you. Greater than the pyramid of Cheops, your memory will descend through the coming ages, and shine in the future like a star of the first magnitude. But I beg of you to enlighten me on one point. How can you inject doses of philosophy, or of any other science?"

"In this manner," replied Schnaps, highly flattered by my compliments—"but, first, allow me to place before you some general considerations of the highest interest. You may have remarked, Dr. Bénédum, that great philosophers, great mathematicians, great poets, and generally all great ideologists, end miserably. Scoffed at during their lives, dishonoured, despised, and sometimes even hunted like wild beasts, they become, after their death, the prey of a certain class of individuals known under the name of *practical men*. A great deal of beautiful sentiment has been written, during the last three thousand years against this

of genius by mediocrity; but that does not prevent things from going on, at the present time, exactly as they went on in the days of Homer, Pythagoras, Socrates, and many other celebrated ideologists—'they persecute, they kill them,' safe to make for themselves reputations, and to coin money out of their discoveries! All this is passably melancholy and distressing, I admit, doctor; but at bottom nothing is more simple, and I will even say more natural. For an idea to succeed in this world, it must have the support of the masses. Now the masses, who don't know how to raise themselves to the light of the pure ideal, admirably understand the ideal materialised, that is to say, *fact*. This is the sole source of the pretended power of practical men over ideologists. Those fellows are rich, powerful; they govern the world, statues are erected to them. Why?—because they put at the disposal of a number of ignoramuses the idea of some poor devil of a great man who died of hunger in a garret. Is that true, yes or no?"

"Perfectly true, Master Schnaps."

"Well," continued the apothecary, with an ironical smile, "my spy-glass will suppress the practical men and restore to the ideologists the superiority which is their due; it will materialise ideas, and put them in direct communication with the masses! Let us suppose, for example, that I wish to take an infusion of metaphysics; I apply my eye to the lens. You read Kant to me, and in the proportion and to the extent to which I hear you, and his reasoning enters my head, will it pass forth from my eyes, and print itself upon the prepared plate; it will materialise itself, take bodily form; I see it, it is real, positive; I can have no doubt of its existence, since it is recognised by my senses; and this result is obtained by my infusion."

While Schnaps was explaining to me this great mystery, a furious desire to possess the spy-glass seized on me.

"My dear friend," I said to him, "I hope you will make several of these spy-glasses. Such a discovery belongs to entire humanity."

"To humanity!" he cried; "I should like to know what humanity has done for me! It has treated me as a madman, it has compelled me to live with an insupportable wife, it would have left me to die of starvation, like so many other inventors, if I had not had the resource of selling it drugs."

"But you will obtain public consideration—universal esteem and admiration."

"What do I care for the admiration of a heap of idiots?" cried the apothecary. "Take away from them the discoveries of Guttenburg, Galileo, Newton, and Volta, and there would be nothing left but a troop of asses on their knees before a sword. The admiration of such people! No, no! Let humanity make spy-glasses for itself, I shall keep mine and use it for my own satisfaction."

I was indignant at such selfishness.

"Master Schnaps," I replied, repressing my anger, "permit me to tell you that your reasoning is absurd. You make sublime spy-glasses—very good; but others cultivate the land, sow, reap, grind the grain for us, and bring bread to our houses; others make medicines, others clothes and shoes, others procure for us wine, beer, tobacco, none of which things you disdain. We are all bound one to the other, Master Schnaps; therefore——"

While I was developing this thesis, the apothecary looked at me through his spy-glass.

"Aha!" he cried, interrupting me, "I see what you want. You care very little for humanity. What you

want is my spy-glass; but you shan't have it. Ha! ha! ha!"

On this he shut it up like a spring-hat, placed it in a box, which he carefully locked, then, turning to me with a bantering air, said—

"You'll not look through that any more. It will be a lesson to you, and teach you, for the future, not to play the hypocrite and preach the Gospel for your own profit. You're a sly dog, Dr. Bénédum—a philanthropist! I don't like people of that kind. Oblige me by taking yourself off the way you came."

The blood mounted to my face. I felt a terribly strong desire to chastise Hans Schnaps, who watched me with a cunning expression in his eyes, and insolently pointed to the door; but I all at once recollected that the two boys in the shop above were a pair of thick-set fellows, and prudently retired.

Since then I removed from Mayence to come and live in Nuremberg, and for nearly two years have not seen Hans Schnaps. I think he still goes about the streets in his rusty coat, with his spy-glass under his arm; at least, so Burgomaster Zacharias recently told me in a letter, and I have no doubt of the fact.

What a pity that such a magnificent secret should be in the hands of such a fool!

A thing strange and worthy of remark is, that men of good sense have never invented anything; it is the madmen who, up to the present time, have made all the great discoveries.

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